SOCIAL CHANGE WITHIN THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHRUCH THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF BISHOP JOSEPH GOMEZ

Brandon Arthur Antavian Jasper Davis

Bachelor, Allen University, 2007
M.Div., Payne Theological Seminary, 2011

Mentors

Robert Walker, D.Min.
Kenneth Cummings, D.Min.

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Date: _____

Approved:

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_____
Faculty Mentor:

_____
Associate Dean of Doctoral Studies:

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ABSTRACT

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The context is Wayman AME Church in Wheeling, West Virginia. The goals are to develop a ministry for social awareness through relevant ministries that address societal and community issues, to develop an act of ministry centered on the John Wesley concept of social holiness, and to establish a social service bureau that serves as an independent referral agency and an education center for the community. The mixed methodology consisted of questionnaires, surveys, electronic interview, a quiz, a sermon series and Bible study. The hypothesis is to make the ministry relevant within the community that it serves based on social awareness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am embarrassingly blessed to have been able to do such important work in regards to my educational endeavors. Dr. Robert Walker and Rev. Dr. Kenneth Cummings were exceptional mentors, who not only provided me with the information and assistance to complete my assignments, but encouraged me every step of the way. I would like to also acknowledge my friends Dr. Derek and Aimee Anderson who called, and texted me without fail to ensure that I was making progress every day. Derek is one of the principal persons who told me to pursue my doctorate, and I am so glad I listened to him. My friend and sister Tina DeVeaux who served as my accountability partner and never gave up on me. My best friend, Rev. Jermaine D. Covington, who prayed for me. Rev. Dr. Floyd Wilson Alexander who checked in as often as possible to ask "how's it going" his memory of historical AME facts were helpful and needed as I completed this document. Lastly to my St. Andrewes AME Church family, they gave me time, encouragement, as well as their support. I never knew church love like this before.

DEDICATION

The book is dedicated to my Grandmother, Mrs. Ida Mae Davis. I do not know where I would be in life, had it not been for you. All of my endeavors in education and ministry have been to honor you for all the love you gave to me. I love you more than words can say, and I share this doctorate degree with you because you have truly earned it. I am my grandmother's son, and I honor you, I love you Grandma.

To my adopted parents Rev. Tony and Marilyn Mills and Mr. Michael and Carolyn Kerr, I prayed for parents when I was a child, and God sent me two sets. Thank you for accepting me as you son, and never treating me any other way.

My mentor, Rev. Dr. Orea Jones-Wells, you taught me excellence, and I am humbled to say that I followed your steps and your advice, thank you. Lastly, to my closest friend, my greatest critic, and my angel, Chante M. DeWitt, I pray that I am to you, all that you are to me. I love you, and that will never change.

INTRODUCTION

Social Change within the African Methodist Episcopal Church is a sociological call to the members of African Methodism and more specifically the members of Wayman AME Church in Wheeling, West Virginia. The purpose is to engage in social change within its congregation, and to spread the message of social change to the community at-large. The prophetic preaching and praxis group is designed to address the relationship between hermeneutics and practical theology. The praxis is the central point of departure when engaging proclamation of God's word within the church, and community. The goal is to concentrate on preaching, a centralized understanding of God as understood through hermeneutical biblical interpretation, in relation to a context. To gauge the local congregations, understanding of the mission and purpose of the AME Church is necessary. It is also important to know if congregants understand the terms social holiness, and social change. The writer conducted a project that was designed to address these two terms and what they mean to the ministry of Wayman AME Church.

Within the following six chapters the reader will discover the ministry focus, the state of the art in this ministry, the foundational perspectives, methodology, field experience, and the conclusion. The ministry focus of this document outlines the spiritual journey as well as the spiritual autobiography of the writer. Included in chapter one are the synergy and the context that fuses both the hypothesis and the context together in order to form the framework of the project. Chapter two covers the various disciplines

regarding the term social change and examples of social change used as a means to combat the social problem. The researcher engaged the thoughts and opinions of several scholars, and their comprehension of the terms social change, social holiness, and their practical use in ministry. Chapter three outlines the biblical, historical, and theological foundations. The biblical foundation shows the two primary texts used, which are Micah chapter six verse eight, and Titus chapter one verse five. These biblical texts are used to explain the call of social change within the context and to show the need for social change from a biblical viewpoint.

The historical foundation is a chronological tracking of the terms social holiness and social change from a Methodist perspective. Lastly the theological foundation covers the theological perspective of the research design. Chapter four deals with the methodology of the research, the researcher used a mix methodology by employing both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain necessary information for the project. The methodology also included a survey, questionnaire, a five part sermon series, a specialized Bible study, and a quiz produced by Walden University. Chapter five gives details of the field experience, aspects of the project and the methods used to conduct it. The chapter six deals with the reflection of the project, the summary of lessons learned, and a conclusion. All of these chapters work together to show the writer's inner most intellectual thoughts regarding social change within the AME Church, as well as the influence from the writer's focus group. The final goal of this document is to lead the local congregation of Wayman AME Church in developing acts of ministry that address the needs of the community by following the ministry example of Bishop Joseph Gomez.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Brandon Arthur Antavian Jasper Davis was born January 23, 1985 to eighteen-year-old Belinda Ann Quinn, and twenty-one-year old Donald Ray Davis, on a cold and wet Wednesday morning at 7:00 am. His parents were not married, and for a long time his father held to the idea of one day marrying his high school sweetheart, nevertheless he learned that not all dreams come true. It is important to mention that while Brandon was Donald's and Belinda's son, he was without question his grandmother's child.

From the time he was born, until the day he left Duplin General Hospital in Kenansville North Carolina, Brandon would spend a major portion of his life with his paternal grandmother Mrs. Ida Mae Davis. Warsaw, North Carolina the home of Brandon Davis, was a small town separated by race, classism, and social standings. Brandon and his family lived on the side of town that was heavily dominated by black people, while his grandmother lived in between Warsaw and Bowden along the United States Railroad on Highway 117. Throughout his young life, Brandon would only know two addresses, his mothers who lived off of South Gums Street on Liberty Lane, and his grandmother 387 NC 50 US 117. During his infant years, he spent much of his time with his grandmother with the assistance of his aunt Debbie Ann Davis, and her brothers and sisters. From the time Brandon was born he spent two complete years being raised by his grandmother and his aunts with his mother coming over during the day, only to leave at

night and return some days later. The arrangement wore out, and his mother came to get her son, only to bring him back with the understanding that she couldn't raise both Antron (Brandon's older brother) and Brandon by herself. So off and on Brandon would spend his life between the two addresses, but as time would pass he would develop a love for only one, his grandmother's house.

As Brandon grew up so did his mother, because she was so very young when she conceived Antron Luther Quinn at the age of 15. She went through various mental and physical experiences while being raised by her mother, Brenda Joyce Boykin Quinn. She did not possess the mental faculty to raise two children. Brandon learned while in his teenage years that his mother gained her life lessons as she taught them to him and his brother, and later his sister Alexus Montia Dixon.

Living in Belinda's house was an experience in itself. Due to her physical abuse as a child, being raped as a teenager by her Uncle, and forced to be her mothers designated driver at the age of thirteen, she adamantly tried to be the best mother. After the passing of her father Eddie Quinn a man whom Brandon never met, she inherited a small wealth of money and used it as down payment on her first home and to purchase a car.

Brandon while very young can still recall small memories of growing up in that two-bedroom, one bath mobile home, with his mother doing all that she physically could to make ends meet. It would not be until some years later that his mother would have purchased a larger mobile home giving both her and her son's a little privacy. A larger trailer would allowed his mother to have her room and bathroom and for Antron and Brandon to share a room and a bathroom. That living arrangement would last until they

moved out of that trailer and into a three-bedroom apartment with one bath and only his mother, and baby sister having their rooms. During his boyhood, Brandon went through various situations that solidified his preaching. Unbeknownst to him, growing up in a household with a mother who suffered from her dark past, and who was incapable of effectively loving her children all served as valuable lessons learned in the ministry.

For example, while growing up things between Brandon and his mother would go array. Brandon's immediate response was to beg to live with his father. Therefore, he recalled moving from his mom's house to his dad's house in Greensboro, North Carolina, a house that his father shared with his wife, Linda McDuffie Davis. While living with his father, he experienced love and affection from his stepmother and his father when he was in town. Brandon's father worked as a long distance driver for Roadway Express, which is today called Yellow Roadway. After moving to Greensboro and realizing that he could not get his way, Brandon would soon blame his reasons for wanting to go back to his mother's house on the fact that he missed his grandmother. So again Brandon's father would pack him up, and take him back to Warsaw to live. The off and on arrangement did not last long, simply because both Brandon's father and mother knew that he was trying to play the two against each other. Brandon's actions caused a small tactical error that would cause a small rift in Brandon's relationship with his mother and father. From that time until the present there is no working relationship between Brandon's mother and father.

After moving back to Warsaw for the final time in November of 1993 Brandon came home to a different house. His brother Antron had grown accustom to having his mother all to himself, and was preparing for the arrival of their new sister Alexus. Having

left a home where it was just Brandon and his sister Jasmine Davis, his father's daughter from another marriage, to his mother's house where there would be three children battling for their mothers attention. Brandon began to notice a drift in the amount of love that both he and his brother would receive from their mother.

As usual, Brandon spent Monday through Friday with his mother. On Saturday morning's he would retreat to his grandmother's house, an arrangement that would last until he left for college in the summer of 2003. It was there at his grandmother's house that Brandon could feel the love that was missing from his life. He enjoyed being with his aunts and uncles, learning how to cut grass and working on cars with his grandfather, Thurman Miller, (his grandmother's boyfriend of over forty years). Brandon loved helping his grandmother fold clothes, snap peas, read mail, address Christmas cards, and anything that would allow him time to share important matters with his family.

It was also while being with his grandmother that he found Christ. It was not long after he returned from living with his father and stepmother that his aunt Mary Louise Davis confronted him saying: "you attended church in Greensboro. You're going to start going back to church here." Brandon always believed that the influence from aunt "Cookie" started him on the path to ministry.

Because his aunts Mary, Gloria, and uncle Eddie were active members of St. Peter's African Methodist Episcopal Church in Warsaw, there was no excuse for him not to attend church. Mary served as an usher along who her brother Eddie, who later became the Sunday School Superintendent, and Aunt Gloria was the Financial Secretary, a Steward, and she did the Sunday Announcements. Brandon began attending St. Peter's in late November of 1993 and by January 4, 1994 he had joined the church, was baptized

and became a youth usher. All of these activities are what he believes that lead in his path for wanting to work in the church. It was not long that his pastor the late Reverend Dewey Cinclair Farmer took a special interest in Brandon's life. He told Brandon every Sunday after service that he would be a preacher. It was a special custom for Brandon after the service had ended that he would go and shake the pastor's hand, which was something Aunt Mary encouraged him to do. While doing so his pastor would place his hand on his head and say to the steward standing nearby: "this boy is going to be a preacher one day."

Brandon adored his pastor, and when he died in October 1996 he was tremendously affected because Brandon was so closely connected to him. There was close interaction with his pastor every first, third, and fifth Sundays of each month. His pastor spoke not only positively about his character and life, but he spoke in his life bringing to pass the will of God which would prove to be true some three and half years later. It was consequently at the funeral of his pastor in Tabor City, North Carolina that he met his new pastor and first lady Rev. and Mrs. Tony Mills. At that time, Brother Mills was somewhat new to ministry and was being given a chance at pastoring what was considered one of the most cantankerous churches in the North Carolina Annual Conference. Reluctantly, Brandon tried to ignore his new pastor only because he was still grieving the loss of Rev. Farmer. However, the sincerity of love and affection shown by his first lady and his new pastor struck within Brandon an appreciation for them that birthed the relationship that they now hold today. Due to the problems that were present in his home, including the lack of love from his mother, the constant depression, and mood swings, caused Brandon to seek for godly parents.

Though he knew his real parents, it became his earnest prayer that he would have someone in his life that he could call "mom and dad," someone who represented what he needed in his life. As Rev. and Mrs. Mills did the work of ministry at St. Peter AME Church, Brandon developed a relationship with their new pastor and first lady that were unlike any they've seen before.

Nevertheless, Brandon found himself calling Mrs. Mills "Mom" and not long after Rev. Mills "Dad." Weekends were spent at his grandma's house and his pastor's house, especially during the conference season. When there were special events taking place in the life of the church, Brandon jumped at every opportunity to be with his new parents. It was not long after this affinity of love that Brandon developed for his pastor and first lady that problems at home between him and his mother would take a turn for the worst.

Rev. Mills was one of the first to encourage him to start speaking in churches, and who developed his mind for understanding the word of God, and ministry. As his love for the church would grow so would his love for his pastor and first lady. It became evidently clear to his mom that someone held her son's attention at church. Tuesday nights were reserved for Bible study, and Brandon could hardly wait to go, for him he loved learning the word of God and asking questions, not to mention spending time with his church family. It was not unusual to be at church at 11:00 pm, still talking, laughing, and sharing the word of God amongst them. Being that Tuesday night was also a school night, Brandon's mother became overly suspicious that something was wrong, and therefore stopped him from going to church. It wasn't enough that she didn't share his love and enjoyment for all things concerning the church; she disapproved of him calling another

woman "mom." Due to the dislike of the first lady, Brandon referred to the first lady by name only. In his biological mother's presence, he called no one else mom, but her. It is significantly important to mention that his mother's actions caused him to act out not only at home, but also in school. As a result, she was forced to call in his pastor and first lady to intervene. While they did help to settle Brandon's behavior down, it proved to his real mother that his affection for them was true and that he found in them what he did not see her.

As time moved on so did his pastor, Bishop Vinton Randolph Anderson saw the work that Reverend Mills was doing at St. Peters and felt that his services could be used at another church. While this was a blessing and a promotion for Rev. Mills and his family, it wasn't quite the same as Brandon and his church. Reverend Mills was ordained and appointed to the pastoral charge of Rue Chapel AME Church in New Bern, North Carolina in Fayetteville, North Carolina in 1998.

It was such a wonderful blessing for Reverend and Mrs. Mills. Brandon along with his aunt and fellow church members stood outside in the church parking in tears. For everyone who stood outside crying, they had finally gotten over the death of Rev. D. C. Farmer. However, for Brandon he was losing his pastor and his parents, and the reality of that was too much for the thirteen-year-old boy. Amazingly, Reverend Mills' tenure at Rue Chapel was short-lived, and he was sent to St. Stephens AME Church, Old Scotts Hill a small city outside of Hampstead, North Carolina.

Every opportunity that presented itself, Brandon, and a few former members, mainly his aunt and cousins, would visit their former pastor and to rekindle a love that was still fresh. Although Old Scotts Hill was not very far, driving that distance every

Sunday proved to be a little crazy. Nevertheless, there was a new pastor at St. Peters, the Reverend Dennis C. Wade of Fayetteville, North Carolina, who desperately wanted to be our pastor. Again, Brandon had to establish a new relationship with a new pastor, and he to get accustom to their way of doing things. It was then that he began to comprehend the inner workings of African Methodism and how the church functioned around the itinerancy. The difference between Rev. Mills and Rev. Wade was night and day. Rev. Wade was a hard person to understand in every sense of the word. He spoke in a loud whisper due to an auto accident, and failure to complete his voice therapy. His preaching lacked substance and style, and he and his family gave you the impression that they were homely and uneducated, to say the least.

Today Rev. Wade is deceased while his wife is a seminary graduate pastoring in the North Carolina Annual Conference. As it relates to their children, one a college graduate and the others are A honor roll students, a lot can be said about judging a book by its cover! Nevertheless, it was under this new and unpolished pastor that Brandon began to sense God's call to ministry. It would be under Rev. Wade's leadership that Brandon would be called to ministry the second week of December 1998 and would preach his "trial sermon" February 28, 1999.

Brandon's call to ministry was nothing new to him; it was, however, strange that it would happen. While driving home from the grocery store, Brandon shared with his Aunt Cookie that he wanted to be a preacher like his Uncle James, who was pastor of St. Luke and Hallsville Missionary Baptist Churches. Her response was "God has to call you to be one" and so because Brandon felt that he would never get that call it felt strange when it happened.

Prior to receiving his call, Brandon had been introduced to the community of churches where he lived as one who could "pray heaven down" and as a youth speaker. Going from church to church he gained public speaking skills from sharing the word of God with young people his age and to those listening adults. So when he announced that he had been called to preach many people were not in shock because he had been operating in that capacity since he was nine years old. Therefore, the official call from God was validating and confirming his future vocation.

Brandon's call to ministry took place in the bathroom of his mother's house. While praying he heard a voice that said to him "you will preach my word." Ignoring it at first because he thought it was his inner self-affirmation the voice said again, "you will preach my word." Now he began feeling that it could be the call that he had been looking for upon hearing the voice for a third time served as confirmation. The voice of God speaking ever so loud and clear said: "preach my word." So on February 28, 1999 Brandon officially stood in the capacity of a preacher using as his subject "We Have a Lack of Understanding." It wasn't long after that his road to ministry took off with lighting speed. Every church in the small town of Warsaw wanted the young and talented Brandon Davis. Some wanted him for his energy, but yet seasoned style of preaching, and others for proof that a child his age could stand and preach God's word.

Due to the multiple appointments, his new pastor, Rev. Olin W. Hendrix felt that he needed to slow down and spend more time at his home church, however, in doing so he wouldn't allow Brandon any opportunity to utilize his skill except on the spur of a moment. Brandon learned then what he knows now the importance of being prepared, but also to prepare the preacher in heart and mind for the preaching moment.

Additionally, Brandon was left to teach the adult Bible study class because his pastor lived almost two hours away. This action sparked concern in the eyes of his presiding elder, the late Dr. Linwood O'Daniel Saunders whom Brandon affectionately referred to as his granddaddy. Dr. Saunders took a special interest in Brandon when he first met him when he was nine and from that point until he died Brandon was always someone special in his eyes.

Dr. Saunders also knew the relationship between Brandon and Rev. Mills. Therefore, he recognized need for a more pastoral influence than opportunity and transferred his membership from St. Peters to St. James AME Church in Kenansville under the pastorate of Rev. Tony Mills. While a member of St. James, he received training for ministry that was lacking in his home church and once again become reconnected with his pastor and first lady, namely his mother and father.

Now at this point Brandon was a high school student living in Clinton, North Carolina and was also a student before the North Carolina Board of Examiners, the training institute for ministers in the AME Church. Many of the bumps and scraps that he received were due to the fact that Brandon was entirely too young for ministry. The board of examiners had never had someone apply for ministry at fourteen. Neither did they have someone who understood fully what God was calling him to do, which was to be a pastor in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

During his five-year stint with the Board of Examiners, Brandon met two people who offered mentoring and understanding, in addition to his parents (Rev. and Mrs. Mills). Rev. John D. Burton came to the North Carolina Annual Conference from the Western North Carolina Conference to help shape the image of the NCBOE and more so

to mentor Brandon. He like a father took Brandon under his wing giving him a concrete understanding for ministry, the AME Church, and help shaped Brandon's understanding of being a pastor. He poured into him what others would deem the real understanding of the infrastructure of African Methodism and how he was expected to fit into the grand scheme of things. He also met Dr. Orea Jones-Wells a former Marine, VA Chaplain, campus minister, and pastor. She became to Brandon his mother that talked to him as a son whom she wanted to see excel not only in ministry but also in his academic studies.

Dr. Jones-Wells cared for Brandon so much so that when he was preparing to leave for college she offered the chance to allow her to adopt him legally. The purpose of adoption was to provide Brandon with the opportunity to draw her military pension while in school. Though his mother never consented to it, she nonetheless, made sure that Brandon had everything he needed while during school. Others offered the same support such as Mrs. Helen Rogers, Dr. and Dr. Roosevelt Holmes, Michael Gaylord Kerr, Rev. and Rev. Phillip Fields, Reverend and Mrs. Tony Mills. Brandon also found favor in the eyes of Bishop and Mrs. Vinton Randolph Anderson, who said that Brandon would be the youngest bishop elected in the AME Church. From that point on Brandon looked forward to attending Annual Conference and being in the presence of Bishop Anderson. They too became like his Episcopal parents whose support he still receives today. While a student at Clinton High School Brandon became popular not because he was one of the cool kids, but because the students felt a connection to him through his ministry, strangely enough he received the nickname from Monica Renee Howard who with the twist of her southern tongue would belt out "ReverendD-AVIS" so much that his teacher began calling him "ReverendD-AVIS."

Although in high school Brandon held true to his call and to the preaching ministry while enduring the troubles he was having at home with his biological mother. She had married and was living in an abusive relationship that turned into a fighting marriage where they would beat each other up. His "step-fathers" had drug and alcohol addictions and his mother was diagnosed with severe "bi-polar" and developed alcoholic tendencies. As a result of the dysfunction, Brandon was forced to preach revivals and Sunday services sometimes back to back to bring money home for food, rent, and to pay his mother's car note.

With such a hectic home to live in Brandon found peace by staying away late at school only coming home in time to go to bed. His weekends were full, and he spent his days at his grandmother's house, Rev. Mills' house and Dr. Jones-Wells house. As he was preparing for college, he was also preparing for his first ordination. He was rejected because of his age. At the age of seventeen he had fully completed what was required to be an ordained deacon in the AME Church. Unfortunately, he was told it would not happen due to his young age. When Brandon turned eighteen, he was excited because his ordination solidified his calling and therefore positioned him as an ordained preacher. The joy of it, however, was short-lived once again Brandon faced a dilemma because his high school graduation was on the same day he was to be ordained. With a host of family relatives shouting for him to attend his high school graduation, it was his mother who said to him to choose and she would support his decision.

With only his mother, sister, his pretend aunt Linda Howard, and his best friend Marcus Bass, Brandon was ordained a itinerate deacon in the AME Church on May 21, 2003. When his name was called at his high school graduation, some sixty-one miles

away, his entire class shouted; "today Reverend becomes a real reverend." That summer was a happy summer, Brandon now Rev. Brandon Arthur Antavian Jasper Davis was an official reverend and was ready for college. Having chosen for his collegiate education and introduction into adult life, Brandon attended Historic Allen University in Columbia, South Carolina.

While a student, he involved himself in student life activities such as Student Government Association, the Student Advisory Committee, the Judiciary Committee, and chapter president of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. He was also privileged to serve as supply pastor of the University Church, Bishops' Memorial AME Church. While majoring in social science Brandon found himself struggling with his issues with his mother, and now his father Donald Davis whose truck route would bring him to Columbia, but he would never stop.

Throughout his life, his father had a constant financial presence, but he failed in being a father. Though he would see him during the holidays, and summers nothing meant more to Brandon than to spend real father and son time with his dad. As a result of those parental issues, Brandon indulged himself in schoolwork, ministry, his fraternal organization, which now include the Prince Hall Masons; he also became a heavy drinker. With the aid of his close friends, he would spend excess amounts of money drinking high-end beverages and sleeping his evenings and weekends away. It wasn't until his senior year graduation party that his drinking became public when he in a rage turned over four tables and threw sixteen chairs. With his action being recorded and submitted to the college president, the students were asked to delete the action from their cell phones. The request from the college president was based on Brandon's record of

being a dean's list student, and an upstanding individual. Brandon was released from any charges for his reckless behavior. The last few days of his college career was spent on pursuing an on-time graduation ad fulfilling a request from Bishop Anderson's to attend Payne Theological Seminary.

Because of his love for Bishop Anderson, Brandon wanted to honor him by going to Payne Seminary, but the idea of it was beyond his contemplation. Payne reminded Brandon of home in North Carolina, the woods, the deer, the cornfields, all of that was not in Brandon's plan; however they were in God's plan.

After his graduation from Allen University, he moved back home to North Carolina and prepared himself to move to Tawawa Springs (Wilberforce) Ohio. When he arrived he fought with all of his might to hold back the tears, for once again he was by himself and was faced with the reality of God's plan for his life. While in the process of moving to Ohio, he had moments of reflections. He shared with his mother and grandmother that he expected to experience good days and bad days. However, he was confident that he would be the better person for having the courage to go to Payne Theological Seminary. His journey at Payne was as he described filled with many emotions that helped to make him the person he is today. One of his biggest obstacles was being able to survive on his own without the aid of his grandmother.

All of Brandon's life was spent with his grandmother, and she has been the guiding force that kept him on the right path. Now that he was ten hours away he had to put his faith into practice and trust God for his survival. Attending Payne Theological Seminary was in some instances a pain; nevertheless, the life lesson and ministry preparedness that he garnered while a student was beneficial.

One thing that Brandon experienced while studying at Payne was the start of his pastoral career. Brandon was for certain that God had intended for him to start pastoring when he moved to Ohio. Prior to that he had only served in the capacity of a supply pastor, now he was given a chance to prove his ability and leadership as a Shepherd of men's souls. Within a month of his arrival, he was asked by Presiding Elder Floyd Wilson Alexander to hold the charge of Mason Chapel AME Church in Findlay, Ohio.

Through his tenure there was short-lived, about thirty short, he was placed in the system as a student willing to pastor. Brandon after his time with Mason Chapel returned to United AME Church in Xenia to assist his pastor on the ministerial staff. It wasn't long after that that Pastor Alphonse Allen was sent to Allen Temple in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Brandon gladly followed him. For a year and some months, Brandon served as an executive minister to the senior pastor at Allen Temple African Methodist Episcopal Church. On November 14, 2008 through the kindness of Bishop Vinton Randolph Anderson and his fraternal friendship with Bishop C. Garnett Henning, Brandon was appointed Pastor of Greater Mitchell Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Mansfield, Ohio.

Over the course of three years, Brandon experienced many situations that made and in some case restored his sense of ministry, and affirmed his calling into the pastorate. During his tenure at Greater Mitchell Chapel, twenty-one persons joined the ministry of which sixteen of them were saved and baptized. Not much work was done that is to be celebrated other than the fact that the word was preached, and souls were saved.

Brandon learned the meaning of real sacrifices and hardships while pastoring Greater Mitchell Chapel. Ass the youngest person in the ministry, it was a difficult task to tell older men and women what to do. Nevertheless over the course of a few months he learned how to manage being a respectful person, while being an administrator at the same time.

Some of the sacrifices that he endured was being a part of an older congregation who little to no expectation for ministry, other than consistently wanting their pastor in the church office. During his first year and a half, he was still a student. Therefore, Brandon had to drive 126 miles one way to the church when he had classes and school functions. During the summer months, he would stay in the parsonage to ease the concern of the parishioners and satisfy their desire to have him close. Being a pastor of a church with an $114,000.00 annual budget, $97,000.00 mortgage, and an annual income that barely met the budget, it was difficult at times trying to see his way through. Brandon learned what it meant to be a student and a pastor, and both of them he did to the best of his ability.

On November 12, 2012 as a final act of his Episcopal office, Bishop C. Garnett Henning kept his promise to "bless" the preacher. The blessing came in the form of an appointed to Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church in Wheeling, West Virginia. Though the journey with Wayman has been short thus far, Brandon has found his joy and passion for pastoring and preaching, and has experienced for the first time in his ministry "church love." Many of the members of Wayman Church have in their way been a blessing to him, and he has learned and is learning how to be a pastor.

Ministry is what you make of it. If your focus is God, and it is that kind of thinking, that propels Brandon Arthur Antavian Jasper Davis to be the best preacher he can be. Further, he strives to be a pastor that will make the people and God proud. In the words, his Bishop Vinton Randolph Anderson "Love the people, and they will love you, serve the people you love and love the people you serve."

The Contextual Analysis

In an effort to do ministry in any context, one must have a sufficient understanding of that particular context. Possessing a working knowledge of what is needed in your given area of ministry allows for the pastor or ministry leader to respond effectively and efficiently. Sadly, however, in most cases there are some instances that do not yield sufficient information, therefore, causing the pastor or ministry leader to operate with a handicap.

In the case for Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church their pastor Brandon A. A. J. Davis was able to gain enough information that would give some insight to the people that he pastors and the community he leads. Wayman Church is in Wheeling, West Virginia a small non-diverse city founded by Colonel Ebenezer Zane in 1769.

The town grew up around Fort Henry, which was built by Captain Crawford and a company of men from Fort Dunmore, Virginia, in 1774.[1] Wheeling was established as a town in 1795 and incorporated in 1836 by a Charter granted by the Virginia Assembly. Wheeling, West Virginia was the capital of the newly formed state from 1863 to 1870

[1] "The City of Wheeling, West Virginia," Our History, accessed December 1, 2012, http://www.wheelingwv.gov/aboutwheeling.php?id=158.

when it moved to Charleston. In 1875, the seat of the government was brought back to Wheeling and remained until 1885, again being transferred to Charleston where it has since remained.[2]

The small transit city began to grow due to the use of the Ohio River that spans along side of Eastern Ohio, Pittsburgh and through West Virginia. Also, the city began to grow due to the steel mills that were being operated in the Ohio Valley. In the last decades of the Nineteenth Century, iron and steel mills developed on the banks of the Ohio River. Other industries thrived, too, including glass works and cigar factories. In particular, the manufacture of cutting iron nails became a major element of Wheeling's economy and Wheeling became known as the "nail capital of the world."[3]

Wheeling during the Nineteenth Century became the richest city in the United States per capita due to the large and vast growing of industries that existed in the city. Sadly as the world began to change, and the use of technology became, more popular Wheeling started to see less and less of the steel mills being used and operated. Though there are some small manufacturing companies that still exist today, many of them struggle to keep their doors open. As a result of the decline of industry and manufacturing jobs, many people have moved out of the city in search of better employment and a means to provide a better lifestyle. Wheeling's demographics also aides the reader in better understanding the make-up of this city, according to the United States 2011 Census, Wheeling has a total population of 28,355 while the state of West Virginia boast 1,855,364.

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[2] "The City of Wheeling, West Virginia," Our History, accessed December 1, 2012, http://www.wheelingwv.gov/aboutwheeling.php?id=158.

[3] Ibid.

Of those numbers, the dominating race, however, is that of whites ranking in at 91.2% with 93.9% being the total number for the state of West Virginia. Blacks rank seconded with a startling percentage of 5.1% of which 3.4% make up the state of West Virginia.[4] Out of the 28,000 people that live in the city of Wheeling, the gender difference is between male and female is 1077. Of the total number 13,834 are male, and 14,911 are female. These statistics speak volumes to the number of female church attendees found in most of the churches in the city. The numbers of households have a total number of 12,770, the number of single families with children is 6,831, and the number of families with children under eighteen years of age is 2,555. The number of married people with children is 4,942 and the number of them with children under eighteen years old is 1,651. The level of education attainment by high school graduates is 89.7%, and those with a bachelor's degree or higher is 25.7%.

The History of Wayman Church

One of the tedious aspects of this work has been the amount of available history for this local congregation. The reader has found during his first year as pastor of Wayman AME Church that there were no valuable records kept from the past and prior administration. The church is made up of mostly family and friends from the local community, and some across the valley in Ohio entrusted their pastor and elected officers to do their job. It has become obviously clear for this researcher that part of the disconnect for the work of ministry that this church has is that no one maintained the records. Some of the former pastors lead with a dictatorial style causing a rift among the

[4] "West Virginia Fact Finder from the U.S. Census Bureau," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed December 2, 2012, http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk.

members, of which some left only to return after that administration was over. Through several conversations held with church members, only a small list of names could be furnished that showed some of the pastors who use to occupy the pulpit at Wayman Church. Out of the list of names, it was made clear that only one of them The Reverend John Stevens served two administrations in the history of the church. According to Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church, the church was founded in 1865. The names of those persons responsible for erecting the former building that used to house this small and influential black church are unknown.

The mission of the church at some point embodied the mission of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, which was to: "Minister of the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people."[5] As previous mention the list of pastors was not furnished for this research work; it is the hope of the current pastor to one day fill the list with those men and women who once served this church.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the desire of the church through the leadership of its current pastor is to meet the needs of the people who live in the Ohio Valley whatever the need may be. The role of any church is to provide the environment that is needed to uplift, and encourage the people that surround the building by meeting the people where they are.

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[5] Johnny L. Barbour, *The Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church,* 48th ed. (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2008), 17

The Congregation

Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church, founded in 1865 the year that the Civil War and the war over, slavery came to a bitter end. Slaves in the United States found out that they were no longer considered property, some of them knew immediately while others did not find out until June 19th, 1865. Juneteenth, as it is called, is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States.[6] Dating back to 1865, it was on June 19th that the Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, landed at Galveston, Texas. The learned the war ended and that the enslaved were now free.[7] Wayman Church originally located on the site that is now occupied by the Wheeling Tunnel held a long and diverse history. Pastors led this small congregation through some of the bitter racial battles that ensued this city.

The culture of Wayman AME Church resembles that of a small country church whose mindset is only to worship on Sunday Morning. The congregation has been for years made up of small families that lived in the city of Wheeling and others that came from surrounding towns such as Bridgeport, Bellaire, Martins Ferry, and Moundsville. Over the years some of the prominent families that existed where the Masons' the Moore's, and the Smith's, presently only a small fraction of them still attend Wayman today.

The age make-up of the church spans from twenty-seven to ninety-one, their pastor Rev. Brandon Davis being the youngest person due to the fact there were no children at the church. As for the socio-economic and political backgrounds, many of the

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[6] "World Wide Celebration," JuneTeenth, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.juneteenth.com/history.htm.

[7] Ibid.

members of Wayman Church are private in their political views. While at least two of its members are known community leaders, one serves on the School Board in Bridgeport, Ohio and the other as the first Black Mayor of the City of Moundsville, West Virginia.

As previously mention in the description of the city if Wheeling, Wayman Church, and its members experienced a surge of success and personal gain during the Nineteenth Century when the steel mills and factory jobs were booming. During the turn of the century many of those jobs were being transferred, some shutting down, forcing many of the residents to move to find a better means of survival. The members of various churches in this small valley experienced a high influx of financial gifts when those jobs were at the heap of their existence. Nevertheless, as the amount of jobs and availability for work decreased so did church membership and their financial contributions.

Today most of the churches in the Ohio Valley are made of members who are from Wheeling and the surrounding towns and have for years held their church memberships at their current locations. This researcher has found it interesting that while many of the people that fill the pews of this particular church hold their allegiance to the city, their dedication to their churches, however, is dubious at best.

The challenges that Wayman membership face deal primarily with their level of faith. Pastor Brandon Davis has for a while been addressing the issues that plague this small church, and has tried to provide a solution that best work for this congregation. Wayman Church is one of the few churches that own its building meaning there is no present mortgage on the building. Recently they were lead by their pastor in purchasing an $111,000.00 parsonage in a more stable and manicured community called Floral Valley. While this is a major feat for a group of twelve to twenty-four members, it is

obviously seen through their actions that they feel their work is complete. While they were blessed to accomplish this major task, it is imperative that more work is done to ensure the future of this church. Not as another church in the city of Wheeling, but as a ministry addressing the needs of the people. Since the arrival of their new pastor, he was able to lead the church in developing a financial system of checks and balances. The check and balance system was a new concept to the congregation.

Church order was restored through the medium of official board meetings on the first Saturday of each month. The consistent meetings provide the church with a financial report of monies collected, spent, and what is available in the treasury. The leadership of the church has been strengthened by putting people in positions that have a vested interest in the work of ministry. However, the struggle has been helping them find their voice to address specific needs.

As prescribed in the Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church there is a steward board that is appointed by the pastor. The sole responsibility of the board is first the spiritual concerns of the church, and secondly to manage all the funds collected and spent on behalf of the church. There is a board of trustees whose job is to care for the temporal concerns the church i.e. all property own by the church.

There is also a stewardess board that works under the advisement of the board of stewards. Their main responsibility is to care for the setting up of Holy Communion, and providing communion to those members who are sick and shut-in. There are several auxiliaries that are required for every local church which that include the Lay Organization, the Women's Missionary Society, the Sons of Allen, and the Young Peoples Division.

Only the Women's Missionary Society exists at Wayman Church. One of the challenges that Wayman faces is the lack of people that make it possible to have a Lay Organization and a Son's of Allen. While there are plenty of young people in the community, Wayman is unfortunate in having any of them that are consistent and active in their church, which is another targeted area for improvement. All of this plays hand in hand with the issues of faith that beset this small congregation. While it is a blessing that the members of this church knew each other and grew up with each other, it is also one of the many setbacks because no one wants to correct anyone. As a result, the work of the church has been stagnant due to lack of support from the people engaged in ministry.

One thing that is clear is that there is a disconnect with what ministry is supposed to be, and what ministry is understood to be from a church perspective. Members of Wayman Church possess a mindset that only wants worship on Sunday morning, and that's it. While this is the format for many of the other churches located in the city, the pastor finds it is difficult to get the membership to see the need for more ministry. The lack of engagement in ministry is relatively due to their faith issues; some of the struggles that face this congregation are financial struggles. It has been determined that this church is utility poor, meaning they are in debt over their utilities. Therefore, the bulk of the income is directed towards their bills, leaving only a small amount to be used for ministry and ministry purposes. As a result fundraisers and programs are constantly being planned so that the church may exist financially.

While everyone means well it is a common knowledge that not everyone understands what church membership mean, and what it means to support your church. Constantly their pastor is forced to spend more time addressing their level of faith instead

of creating meaningful ways to meet the needs of the people both at Wayman and in the community. The city of Wheeling, which is lowly populated by African-Americans, has a total of six black congregations each of them being in proximity. All of them have memberships under seventy-five members and are made of small families that have lived predominately in the Ohio Valley. What does this mean? The level of growth is diminished by the fact there are no employment opportunities, and there are no outside opportunities for positive growth and personal development. With all of these congregations not counting the non-black churches fighting to maintain their memberships each of these six congregations has developed a selfish ideology for ministry.

There is some form of exchange, and fellowship that exist amongst these churches. However, when it comes to planning and promoting ministry opportunities, you find yourself stepping on each other's toes in an effort to create ministries. There is a selfish concept for ministry that exists in this city. In regards to the emerging issues that are present, the Upper Ohio Valley Ministerial Alliance provides an outlet for all the ministers regardless of race and denomination to address them collectively.

Howbeit, what does that say about the effect of an individual congregation on the issues that they see? Because most of these churches operate selfishly, the only way to address the issues facing this congregation is either by participating in the ministerial alliance or ignoring the issues altogether. It is the hope of Wayman's pastor to develop a mindset for ministry that will allow this congregation to address the problems and issues even if they address them alone.

Their level of faith and commitment to ministry outside of the local church is nowhere near the place that will propel them to look beyond their problems and issues as a church. However, not all hope is lost. Through the leadership of their pastor, he is hopeful that everyone will adopt the vision and address the problems of the community. As a result, programs will be sponsored which will provide a safe environment while at the same time benefitting the ministries of the church that address the individual needs.

While the current standing of Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church looks bleak at best, there is hope in the transforming gospel that is preached and taught on a weekly basis. The goal is to find creative and inspiring ways that will energize this congregation to respond to the issues that exist in the local congregation first and then in the community. Their pastor Rev. Brandon A. A. J. Davis is hopeful through his doctoral program he will create a ministry mindset that will transform his congregation from the inside out. The transformation will cause them to see the need for a more tactful response to the call of God to ministry. Additionally, the transformation can be used, as a catalyst to address the problems that exist in the city of Wheeling, West Virginia.

While not everything hinges on racial concerns and economic challenges, there is major need to provide people with an outlet that will allow them to experience something other than their everyday life. There is a cry of help coming with within that seeks a deeper and more fulfilling experience of God that goes beyond Sunday morning. Pastor Davis through his doctoral study endeavors to energize, and inspire the people of Wayman Church to create a fulfilling experience of God. He attempts to do so by equipping the saints through action and assisting them in carrying out the real mission of the church that is to meet the needs of the people.

Contextual Needs

Wheeling, West Virginia, a small non-diverse city founded by Colonel Ebenezer Zane in 1769 runs the scale in terms of socio-economic status. Wheeling whose population is 28,355 boasts all three social classes the wealthy, the working middle class, and the working poor. The population of the state of West Virginia is 1,855,364. Racially, Wheeling is 91.2% white, with Blacks making up a surprising 5.1% of the city population. The state of West Virginia has a similar demographic, with whites making up 93.9% of the population and Blacks comprising only 3.4%.[8]

These startling facts and figures have enabled this researcher to identify some of the contextual needs for this project. One of the major and crucial needs for Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church is to develop a sense of "Social Awareness." Many of the members of Wayman Church, have lived with the racial difference and the racial response from city leaders and government officials all of their lives.

The most common response towards racial inequality that this researcher has been able to identify is one that allows for the blacks of this community to exist without giving the problem of race and equality any significant importance. While Wheeling, boast of being one of the few cities in the state of West Virginia to fight for racial equality, there are many signs that the mentality of this city has not changed.

To shed light in regards to social awareness, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, through its mission statement, irons out the churches response. The mission of the AME Church is to "minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all

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[8] "West Virginia Fact Finder from the U.S. Census Bureau," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed December 2, 2012, http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/page/productiveview.xhtml?src=bkmk.

people."[9] In an effort to fulfill this mandate for ministry, Wayman AME Church has to develop their "Ministry Perspective" for an active ministry. In developing an Act of Ministry (AOM), that will provide a means of meeting the needs of the people, whatever those needs may be. Some of the needs are to develop a community church, create relevant ministries, provide safe havens for youths, and become a community information center that will act as a social service bureau for the community at-large.

One of the interesting aspects of a developing ministry is that the church has to be able to maintain its purpose and mission, while at the same time adapting to the changes that are happening around it. When appointed to Wayman Church in November of 2011, Brandon A. A. J. Davis coined as a marquee header for the church: "Vibrant traditional worship, practical expository preaching." It was through that statement that he felt the church could express its need for maintaining the tradition without losing its spiritual essence and necessity. While at the same time embracing a more inclusive and relaxed form of worship. Pastor Davis also wanted to emphasize the need for expository preaching that gives credence to the purpose of coming to church.

It is also through the medium of preaching that Pastor Davis wanted to address the issues of social awareness, develop a ministry perspective, and develop a community mindset for addressing the needs of the community. He wanted to develop a church-based social service bureau and to evangelize the community through these various efforts. Wayman AME Church is one of the few predominately black congregations in the city that does not have an influential presence in the city.

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[9] Johnny L. Barbour, *The Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church,* 48th ed. (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2008), 17.

The sole reason Wayman is not influential is the lack of evangelism. In a nutshell, evangelism simply means to compel people to Christ. However, if the church is to bring the people into the church, it must be prepared for them to come. Too often, our churches cease to be productive because they are not prepared to meet the needs of the when people come to church. Through the lens of the contextual analysis, the researcher recognized that Wayman Church lacks influence. The people have not yet learned the meaning of evangelism, nor have they identified their ministry perspective. The ultimate purpose for this project is to create social change in Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church. In order to do that, it is, however, necessary to identify the needs of the church, and then to create an AOM that will allow for the fulfillment of those various needs.

Skills for Ministry

Brandon Davis grew up in a community that was separated by race. It was also a community that shared a socio-economic status similar to Wheeling. There were wealthy, working middle class, and the working poor living in Warsaw, North Carolina. He was reared by a single mother, but not entirely by herself. His fraternal grandmother, surrogate parents and another surrogate mother, provided Brandon with the necessary training and development that his mother could not provide. Due to his life's experience of being raised in a single parent home, in a working poor family, and being surrounded by drugs and alcohol, depression, and racism, he brings to the table a working knowledge of real issues that affect people at various levels. During his matriculation at Allen University, he began to expand his knowledge and understanding of social problems by

majoring in social science, with a minor in philosophy. Because he was already an ordained elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church by his sophomore year, he had already begun to infuse his personal theology with his novice understandings of social problems.

As Brandon prepared for a life of ministry in the AME church, he began to seriously explore the idea of social change, as depicted through the ministry of the late Bishop Joseph Gomez. Joseph Gomez was a mentee of Bishop Reverdy Ransom, a proponent of the social gospel. Ransom and Bishop R. R. Wright developed an act of ministry that addressed the needs of the people in an inner Chicago city.

The Social Gospel was described by Bishop R. R. Wright as "the necessary outflow of the spirit of Jesus, by making practical it's [church] beliefs in God and brotherhood, and to help build a Christian society on earth."[10] Ransom and Wright worked tirelessly in trying to effect change in the suburban communities of Chicago by dealing with the issues of social equality and classism. As time progressed so did their understanding of what the Social Gospel was and what the Social Gospel lacked in their particular contexts.

The Social Gospel was a movement led by a group of liberal Protestant progressives in response to the social problems raised by the rapid industrialization, urbanization, and increasing immigration of the Gilded Age.[11] The reality was that the Social Gospel failed to reach beyond the working middle class down to the working poor. Thus, the Social Gospel failed to reach far beyond its middle-class liberal Protestants'

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[10] Richard R. Wright, Jr. *Eighty-Seven Years Behind The Black Curtain: An Autobiography* (Philadelphia, PA: Rare Books Company, 1965), 149.

[11] "The Worlds Leading Questions and Answers," Answers, accessed February 5, 2013, http://www.answers.com/topic/social-gospel.

milieu. Ultimately, the greatest achievement of the Social Gospel movement was to prepare the ground of middle-class America for progressivism. Nevertheless, Ransom, Wright, and Gomez began to see their ministry shaped by the concept of social change. Social change was fundamental to the mission to meet the needs of society and to effect change in the areas and places that were most important to the embodiment of the church's mission.

Thus Brandon, like Ransom, Wright, and Gomez, brings to the table of ministry a socio-theological understanding of our involvement in society, as it relates to the church. The needs of the people are the very things that affect the people and the community in which one serves. As for the members of Wayman AME Church, they are surrounded by racial inequality and racism.

They are also confronted with the need for evangelism because a large number of un-churched people in the community are desperately looking for the purpose and spiritual fulfillment. They are also in an area where the local and city government lack a presence. However, these leaders have a direct relationship with the people who are affected by the lack of employment, social service assistance, racial discrimination and equal representation. As a supporter of social change, not only in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, but the community as well, this researcher must begin to address the needs of his context.

He is starting with the congregation he serves by implementing an act of ministry that will develop the church as a community church through the praxis of prophetic preaching. Prophetic preaching, as seen in the book Amos, calls for the leaders of God to focus their attention not only on themselves, but on the people they are called to serve.

By becoming aware of the issues that affect the believing community. For the past eighteen years, Brandon has been preaching the word of God, and has received formal training and education through his seminary experience through which he earned a Master of Divinity degree. Currently, he is pursuing the Doctor of Ministry degree, which will further aid him in implementing this project. Another act of ministry is to create ministries that will meet the needs of the people.

As a pastor, Brandon has served four congregations. He has left an impressionable mark on the people of Bishops' Memorial AME Church, Mason Chapel AME Church, Greater Mitchell Chapel AME Church, and his current charge Wayman AME Church. While serving each of those congregations, he showcased his ability to provide effective preaching and pastoral leadership.

Since his arrival at Wayman, he has shown his abilities as a community leader by serving in multiple capacities such as the secretary of the Upper Ohio Ministerial Alliance; board member and secretary for Laughlin Memorial Chapel, INC.; visiting speaker for Spiritual Emphasis Day at Laughlin Chapel, and volunteer member of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Committee that provides community events during and around Dr. King's birthday.

In regards to creating and developing social awareness, Brandon writes for the local newspaper, *The Wheeling Intelligencer,* a column he shares with other local pastors in the city of Wheeling, West Virginia. Brandon had several of his theological works published in the *AME Church Review*, a scholarly journal that includes a range of topics, from theology, philosophy, sociology, and education to politics. Most recently he wrote, *A Call to Social Holiness* for the *AME Church Missionary Magazine.*

He has also been afforded the opportunity to lecture and make presentations on Christian education, as well as social change, showing how the church can utilize its understanding of the Bible and engage ministry through the issues in their perspective communities. Using these skills as a preacher, pastor, community leader, and writer Brandon feels he can shape and form a ministry of action through the medium of social change.

Synergy

While looking at the needs of the context and the skills set of the researcher, it is his goal to infuse those two together to develop a ministry of social change. The ministry will be implemented by developing social programming at the local church, which will serve as a centralized location for the community to hear from city leaders and officials who may not be interested, or comfortable in going to city hall, but who may feel inclined to come to the church.

This social programming will provide a "safe place" to address and discuss issues in the local community. The "safe places" are town hall meetings, and public forums people in the community can ask questions and listen to civic leaders and their proposed plans to effect change in the city of Wheeling. Once a month on Sunday evenings, there will be an opportunity for persons who serve in socially and professionally to talk about the services they offer, and the benefits to be gained by the community. This will be done by removing the pulpit and allowing it to serve as a platform stage where community leaders can talk to the people of their community.

A second initiative will be to develop a church-based social service bureau that will operate as a referral and training service. This will be done by partnering with local companies and organizations that are willing to provide services to members of the church and community. We would also seek organizations to provide training and education for the unemployed, continuing education, health services, financial and management. The reason for developing a social service bureau is because the church is a central location, and a comfortable place for people to ask for help.

It will be part of the ministry perspective and mission of the church because the church will be able to fulfill the mission of the local and connectional church by "ministering to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people."[12] The third part of the project will be to create and implement relevant ministries that meet needs. In the community, there are single mothers with young children, people suffering from addictions, persons who are re-entering society and persons who are looking for a purpose in life. The church can fulfill its mandate for ministry by developing ministries that will speak directly to problems such as these. At Wayman church, there are people who minister in song and word at the local prison. A former inmate, who now serves as a trustee of the church, has a letter-writing ministry to inmates who are still in jail. There are also persons who have worked in the legal system that can help with reorientation back into society.

The last part of this project will be to develop a sermon series that will speak to needs of the church and the implementation of this project. The sermon series will be about social change and the church's response to meeting the needs of the people. The

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[12] Johnny L. Barbour, *The Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 48th ed. (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2008), 17.

pastor will utilize his understanding of social holiness, which means to link faith and social responsibility in an effort to bring about action.[13] He will utilize social regeneration, which is the improvement of a community or neighborhood, by developing a church that will help with community engagement, urban master planning, neighborhood management, and training and support.

Finally, he will endeavor to inspire the members of Wayman AME Church by calling on his understanding of social change from a church perspective. Social change will entails altering the social structure of a community by changing their thought process. With the aid of the Holy Spirit, he hopes to create an act of ministry for the people that will meet their needs and provide substantive and lasting change.

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[13] H. Weems Jr., *Pocket Guide: John Wesley's Message Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 62.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN MINISTRY

The design of this chapter covers the subject of social holiness and social change, which will focus primarily on the theological, sociological, and historical renderings of the term. It is important to understand that while these words have two separate and distinct definitions, their usage in this literary work is germane to the mission, and ministry of the Methodist movement, and thusly the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

John Wesley the founder of the Methodist movement understood social holiness to be an act of Christian fellowship, however, it is not to be a privatized notion of Christian faith. He recognized that there is no social holiness without incorporating social change, to properly quote Wesley, Johnston McMaster wrote in a published article entitled *Wesley on Social Holiness:* "One cannot go to heaven alone but one needs friends. It is within Christian community that holiness of life is to be realized. Today social holiness needs to be extended beyond ecclesial *koinonia*. It is within the socio-economic and political community that holiness of life is to be realized." With this understanding of social holiness and social change in relation to the work of ministry within the church, Wesley shows us the importance of showing a vested interest in the community as well. Ministry within the church does nothing for the community at-large

if the work of the church cannot be fully visualized outside of it. Kevin Watson writes in *Pursuing Social Holiness:*

> John Wesley believed that holiness is a fundamental part of the Christian life. For Wesley, holiness was not a matter of indifference that was optional for an elite few. He also believed that holiness was best nurtured through a supportive and discipline community. Wesley's dedication to creating and maintaining structures for communal Christian formation, then, came out of his conviction that holiness is necessarily social.[1]

The totality of Wesley's vision stemmed from his personal conviction that holiness both social and spiritual was a necessity for Christian life. Although this was the theological renderings of a true Methodist, he also felt that it was not to be limited to just the Methodist, but to all persons who would be Christians.[2]

In Wesley's sermon *The Almost Christian* from Acts 26:28, Wesley made a profound statement about the true essence of being a Christian, "It is not almost but altogether a Christian."[3] The role of Christianity in society cannot be limited to just one's personal interpretation. The true Christian must address not only Gods will in regards to salvation, but also Gods will towards humanity. The problems that affect the people within the church, also affects those who are outside the church.

Christians have a fiduciary response to the issues that affect not only those who are members of the church, but also those persons who are outside of the churches reach. The reality for Wesley and the church of today is that socio-economic problems still exist, also social inequality, racial prejudice, social gentrifications, and social injustice. Kevin Watson further explains that, "the altogether Christian is a person who loves God,

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[1] Kevin Watson, *Pursuing Social Holiness: The Band Meeting in Wesley's Thought and Popular Methodist Practice* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 39.

[2] Ibid.

[3] James Hargreaves, *The Almost Christian* (London, England: Hargreaves Publishing, 2012), 278.

loves neighbor, and has faith that they are reconciled to God by the work of Christ."[4] One conclusion that could be drawn from Wesley's idea of social holiness is that love plays a pivotal role in the application of social holiness, and is the conduit by which social change becomes a reality. How can Christians attempt to do the work of ministry if they have not yet fully realized the compelling power of love, which causes one to do and to act in accordance with the will of God? That is why John Wesley called for social holiness within the Methodist movement; those who would be Methodist must already possess the calling from God to transform the world by spreading scriptural holiness across the land.[5]

As seen in today's society, social holiness has a different outlook as well as a different definition. Most people do not associate the term social with holiness. Neither is the term associated with a particular church or denominational theological beliefs. Nevertheless, real social holiness is a lifestyle committed unto God and the preservation of God's people.

Wesley made it abundantly clear that holiness is necessarily social and must be nurtured in a community of accountable Christians.[6] The work of social change cannot be completely done by those who are merely concern for the welfare of our communities. Real social change must take place through the usage of the Wesleyan model of social holiness. Christians must show themselves to be true Christians by caring for one another in the manner prescribed by Jesus Christ, for it is truly said: "Love your neighbor

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[4] Kevin Watson, *Pursuing Social Holiness: The Band Meeting in Wesley's Thought and Popular Methodist Practice,* 40.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., 44.

as yourself," (Mark 12:31).[7] The implications of social holiness and social change make the two similar. The distinction of social holiness compels believers to see how his or her brother or sister is fairing in their life, and their walk with God and social change is the effects of having done so. The role of the church within society through the eyes of Methodism as understood by Wesley is twofold: "to lead individuals to renewal through Gods grace in justification and sanctification and thus a meaningful life, and to guide them into activity suited to transform the whole of society from within."[8]

A Sociological Approach to Social Change

In an effort to better understand the importance of social change the writer was lead to Walden University, who in 2011 conducted its first international study on the subject of social change. Their findings were recorded in what would latter become their annual social change impact report. Each year Walden University focuses it's research on a different area of social change. However, it was their 2013 report that explains the purpose and nature of the impact report: "In 2013 social change impact report Walden University identifies distinctive profiled of social change agents around the world and include many of their key motivations, interest and levels of involvement, ultimately putting a face on social change."[9]

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[7] Biblical citations within the document are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted, Mark 12:31.

[8] Manfred Marquardt, *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principals* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 119.

[9] Walden University, "*2013 Social Change Impact Report*," accessed on February 22, 2015, http://www.waldenu.edu/about/social-change/impact-report-2013.

The intent of the report was to learn more about people who were not only interested in doing social change, but more specifically positive social change, and were also involved in positive social change in their communities and aboard. This type work goes beyond the call of the church and extends to the greater good of all people; however, this model of social change is an example in which the church should follow in its pursuit to be socially relevant. What is so important about this report is that it identifies the interest of people involved in social change as well as their key motivations.

> The report identifies distinctive profiles of social change agents around the world and includes many of their key motivations, interests and levels of involvement, ultimately putting a face on social change agents. Social change can mean different things to different people. For the purpose of this report, positive social change refers to involvement in activities that improve the lives of individuals and communities locally and around the world. It includes a range of activities, such as volunteering or service, donating money, goods or services, and educating others about a particular issue or cause.[10]

The report also took the initiative to identify the six types of social change agents that are responsible for the work of positive social change. The defining characteristics of these segments typically relate to their levels and types of involvement and their motivations for engaging in social change.[11] The agents are identified as:

- Ultra committed Change-Maker
- Faith-Inspired Giver
- Socially Conscious Consumer
- Purposeful Participant
- Casual Contributor
- Social Change Spectator

In order to identify what type of social change agent you are, Walden University created the "what type of social change agent are you?" quiz which asked a total of seven

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[10] Walden University, "*2013 Social Change Impact Report*," accessed on February 22, 2015, http://www.waldenu.edu/about/social-change/impact-report-2013.

[11] Ibid.

questions that in the end determined what the key factors, motivations, and inspirations were the influence for someone's participation in social change work. Each of the categories is designed to show just how social change agents participate in the work of social change, and in most cases their names speak for themselves. After taking the quiz, the writer was determined to be a faith-inspired giver, according to the impact report: "Religion is a driving force behind faith-inspired givers who cite their faith, not work or school, as a major influence in their commitment to social change. They may feel blessed in their lives and want to give back to their community, attend a religious service regularly and feel a moral obligation to participate in social change."[12]

Although Walden University did not concentrate their work on social change in light of the church, they did however provide information that can be useful to the church to better understand what is needed in order to become socially relevant to the people they serve. The work of social change is not only unique and appropriate to the ministry of the church, but also to societies complete and total change.

Social change is a global phenomenon, and people around the world value and participates in positive social change.[13] Social Change from a sociological perspective is an ongoing conversation and debate that should continue not just in the academic arena, but in the church as well. As mentioned before, the church could take from this sociological approach the examples of change agents, and use them to their advantages to combat the issues that face the church on a regular basis. H. Richard Niebuhr in his book: *The Purpose of the Church and its Ministry* says:

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[12] Walden University, "*2013 Social Change Impact Report*," accessed on February 22, 2015, http://www.waldenu.edu/about/social-change/impact-report-2013.

[13] Ibid.

> There is, as we have noted, a debate between those who define the last end of the church individualistically as salvation of souls and those who think of it as the realization of the redeemed society. But extreme individualism and extreme emphasis on society are rare. Recognition of the social character of the individual and of the interpersonal character of society brings the parties somewhat closer to each other and both are challenged by the question: what is the chief end of man, whether as redeemed individual or redeemed community?[14]

The Social Crisis

Again to better understand this concept of social change, one would have to set their gaze upon the greatest model of social work humanity has ever seen, Jesus Christ. Walter Rauschenbusch in his book *Christianity and the Social Crisis in the Twenty-First Century* makes a very argumentative response to the role and nature of Jesus Christ in relation to social change. Jesus knew and recognized human nature and appropriately responds this way: "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear."[15]

Rauschenbusch continues to say, "we see in the Bible what we have been taught to see there. We drop out great sets of facts from our field of vision. We read other things into the Bible, which are not there."[16] For the socially conscious person, it is easy to view Christ as a socialist, someone who is on the side of those who are wronged by society. It is furthermore easy to suggest that the role of the church is to mimic that of Christ, but in order to mimic the work of Christ one must have a full understanding of who Christ really is in light of religion and the society.

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[14] H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* (New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers, 1956), 29.

[15] Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis in the Twenty-First Century* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007), 39.

[16] Ibid.

The writer in his thinking considered Jesus Christ to be a socialist, simply because of his interpretation of the ministry of Christ. One can easily suggest that Christ's ministry was an act of social change even John Wesley viewed it as such, simply because Christ met the needs of the people. There are various examples in scripture that reveals the social nature of Christ, and thus it is almost difficult to imagine the work of Christianity without totally seeing it and its founder as social. However, Rauschenbusch argues, "Men are seizing on Jesus as was the first socialist."[17] He further writes that Jesus is not (social) that at all, he was an upholder of law and order, a fundamental opponent of the closed shop.[18] "But in truth Jesus was not a social reformer of the modern type. Sociology and political economy were just as far outside of his range of thought as organic chemistry or the geography of America. He saw the evil in the life of men and their sufferings, but he approached these facts purely from the moral, and not from the economic or historical point of view."[19]

The social aims of Jesus Christ are seen in his relation to his time. Rauschenbusch writes "he was not a timeless religious teacher philosophizing vaguely on human generalities. He spoke for his own age, about concrete conditions, responding to the stirrings of the life that surged about him."[20] To put it plainly, Jesus did not set out to be a revolutionary, or to be an agent of social change, he simply sought to address the issues that he encountered through eyes of God and the lenses of God's word.

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[17] Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis in the Twenty-First Century,* 41.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., 42.

In consulting the gospels, one will experience in many instances where Christ intervened with tradition to address the core the problem as in Mark the fifth chapter, Christ met a man possessed of the devil. What is seen is simply a matter of interpretation. Nevertheless, it is clear that Christ meets two of the possessed man's needs, the first need was that he needed to be delivered from his demonic oppression and to receive salvation, and his second need was to be restored back to his community. To the naked eye, this is social holiness being enacted through modes of social change to alter the social order of things to include behaviors of certain social relations.

This is where the nature of Jesus Christ is seen to be that of a social agent, but Rauschenbusch argues that this is nothing more than Christ's "religion flowing outward, naturally and without effort reconstructing everything that it touches."[21] He says later in full discourse "No comprehension of Jesus is even approximately true which fails to understand that the heart of his heart was religion. No man is a follower of Jesus in the full sense who has not through him entered into the same life with God."[22] To separate the nature of Christ, which embodies both, his religious and social order leads one to misunderstand Jesus.[23] The work of social change through the working of Christ cannot be clearly understood according to Rauschenbusch unless seen as one equal part working together and not independently of the other.

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[21] Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis in the Twenty-First Century*, 40.

[22] Ibid., 42.

[23] Ibid.

To further explain the idea of the social nature of Jesus Christ, Thomas Oden takes a different approach to Christ social nature and ministry in his book *John Wesley's Teachings on Ethics and Society*, Oden says: "Christianity is the most social of all religions because inward intent has outward consequences.[24] As Christians, we are required for religious conversion and experience to be different and to show the nature our difference through our interactions with the unsaved world.

More specifically to be salt and light, Oden goes on to say that the salt and light metaphors reveal how holy living is engaging and contagious to those who glimpse it. It is intrinsically beautiful and admirable. It is beautiful because it reflects the beauty of (social) holiness.[25] If one were to read Oden and have never experienced the words of Walter Rauschenbusch, one would be persuaded to think Christ as an agent of social change.

If the words of Wesley through Oden's interpretation are true, Christ's engagement with the people and his sensitivity to the problems that affect not just people individually but the whole of community leads one to believe what John Wesley has so poetically said of Christ: "the gospel of Christ knows no religion, but social: no holiness but social holiness."[26] Oden goes a step further to say: "It was said of the Son of God that he manifested the "brightness of his glory, the express image of his person," beaming forth God's eternal beauty "yet so tempered and softened, that even the children of men may herein see God and live." Having beheld the light of the coming of the Son, we can

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[24] Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley's Teachings,* vol. 2, *Ethics and Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers), 211.

[25] Ibid., 210.

[26] Lovett H. Weems, Jr., *Pocket Guide to John Wesley's Message Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 72.

reflect that light proximately in our human interactions."[27] Regardless of whose interpretation of Christ's social nature you may read, one thing is important, and that is Christianity must be social if any real value is to come of it. People within our various communities must encounter a real Christ concerned with the real problems and issues as experienced by real people. It would be a mistake to imagine that Christianity is only an inward religion with no outward, visible expressions.[28]

Perhaps this is the thinking of several of our churches and ministries throughout the African Methodist Episcopal Church, they have an obfuscated view of Christ to be merely personal and private and have not yet come to the realization that true Christianity is indeed social. Thomas Oden says that kind of thinking only allows the selfish Christian to see the work of Christ as heavenly contemplation, communing only with God with no outward actions or social outcomes.[29]

Ministry must be relevant to the times as well as the people the church serves, no ministry can be considered useful or needed if it does not meet the needs that are most prevalent such as poverty, economics, educations, wholeness of being and salvation. Ministry is both active and patient in perfect coordination according to the need at hand.[30] It accesses the problems and issues faced by the people and seek to change not only the inner person, but also the total being. Oden says the following as a conclusion to this thought: "Just as salt provides taste for food, the holy life of the believer mixes in with the habits and daily lives of others to flavor the fallen and mending family or the

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[27] Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley's Teachings,* vol. 2, *Ethics and Society*, 211.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., 212.

darkened world. It makes human behavior savory in the presence of God and humanity. By this means every human interaction may lead in some measure to the person-by-person spread of the gospel of social holiness in the family and social order."[31]

Socialism in the African Methodist Episcopal Church

Social Change in the African Methodist Episcopal Church is deeply rooted in its history and mission for being a church created for the people of a rejected nation. African men and women were brought to this country in chains, stolen from their homeland under the cover of night, and forced to toil the lands of a country that would never see them as their equals. Even in the infancy of African Methodism those of African descent experienced a modicum of value and success. They won their case against the Methodist Episcopal Church, South to be a free and independent church that would later be called Bethel. "Richard Allen and his followers achieved a place in the high company of men like Martin Luther and John Wesley because they met a turning point in religious history with intelligence, courage, and faith. They were the first to strike a blow for independence, freedom, and equality in the church for Negroes in the United States."[32] These prophetic words from Reverdy C. Ransom have served as the order of the day when it comes to the ministry agenda of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He strongly felt and was inwardly moved by a personal ethos of social change for a rejected people. Therefore, he fought against it at every

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[31] Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley's Teachings,* vol. 2, *Ethics and Society*, 212.

[32] Anthony B. Pinn, *Making the Gospel Plain: The Writings of Bishop Reverdy C. Ransom* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 153.

point in religious life, ministry, and social advancement any time it reared its ugly head. His theological discourse regarding the inferiority of blacks in America can be summed up in his own words: "God brought naked barbarians from Africa, put them upon the anvil of American Christianity and Democracy, under the white heat of denial and persecution. He is fashioning them with sledgehammer blows into a new pattern from American civilization."[33]

Social change within the African American community, as well as the AME Church, was essential to Bishop Ransom as was air, food, and water. He spent a major portion of his ministry arguing and ranting for change not only in society, but he desired greatly for that change to come from within the black church. At the Thirteenth Session of the General Conference of the AME Church held May 6, 1936, Bishop Ransom outlined the strengths and potentials of the AME Church, in his quadrennial sermon *"The Church That Shall Survive"* he made the following references to the members present at that convention: "…If the church is to live up to its potential, its leadership must be called, committed, and visionary. If the church does not make itself relevant, it will not survive because its importance is not based simply upon tradition and history; rather, it is based upon its response to current crises."[34] The ideals of the AME Church was not to be a mundane church, following the pattern of other black churches seeking only to be different in name, worship style, and practices. It was to be different in its theology, biblical interpretation, and application of its ministry. Ransom went a step further to say, that if the AME Church is to simply be like the other religious bodies with the same

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[33] David L. Lewis, *W. E. B. Dubois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), 329.

[34] Ibid., 152.

standards, aims, objectives, and if the church ceases to be unique or distinctive, there is no point for our enthusiasm or cause for us to lie upon the altar of self-denial of suffering and pain.[35] The AME Church was born ten years after the liberty bell split its throat ringing out the nation's independence and stemming the tide of change and progress in this newly form nation for years to come. African Methodism under no other banner and quest for freedom were on behalf of its constituency achieve for its people the freedom, which belongs to all persons who have been born of God through faith in Jesus Christ.[36]

What was so special about the genius of Reverdy Cassius Ransom was that he was blessed with perspicacity to see into the future of both the world and of the AME Church, though historians categorized him including Dr. Dennis C. Dickerson retired (General Officer for the Department of Research and Scholarship) to be madly passionate about transforming all of American society.

This desire for transformation was evident by Ransom whom Stephen W. Angell and Anthony B. Pinn called the "premier black social gospel advocate" in *Social Protest Thought in the African Methodist Episcopal Church 1862-1939.*[37] However, this statement regarding the thought and social mind of Reverdy Ransom can somewhat be considered dubious, only because the social gospel movement tended to have a weak record on issues of race relations until African American church leaders such as Reverdy Ransom began to rethink the social gospel in light of race consciousness.[38] It wasn't until

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[35] Anthony B. Pinn, *Making the Gospel Plain: The Writings of Bishop Reverdy C. Ransom*, 153.

[36] Ibid.,154.

[37] Stephen W. Angell and Anthony B. Pinn, *Social Protest Thought in the African Methodist Episcopal Church 1862-1939* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 311.

[38] Ibid., 310.

the Nineteenth Century that ministers within the AME church began to question the more social conscious side of the social gospel, and thereby began to reject it on the premise that that social gospel only concerned itself with the mundane material concerns of the black race. Some ministers in the AME Church believed that the primary concern of the church should be the spiritual condition of the human race everything else should be secondary.[39]

Although Co-founder of the Methodist movement Charles Wesley did not emphasize such notions in the same language as did ministers of the AME church, he did however assert that the church was leaning too heavily on social salvation rather than the primary responsibility as outlined in the gospels that was total transformation.[40] As a result of this change of thought, Ransom and others began to accept a more concrete sociological approach to the needs of people, and therefore aligned themselves with what would later be called social change.

While Walter Rauschenbusch according to Angell and Pinn, kept quiet on the issues of race in regards to social change, and, therefore, shaped there understanding of the concept of a self-imposed, none engaging Christianized theology. Clergy moderates such as Bishop James T. Holly saw social change from a Nineteenth Century agrarian society. There stood tall a redheaded, mad as hell Methodist preacher who strongly and without contrition endorsed socialism based upon a more modern thought that represented the principals of equality.

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[39] Stephen W. Angell and Anthony B. Pinn, *Social Protest Thought in the African Methodist Episcopal Church 1862-1939*, 311.

[40] Ibid.

Anthony Pinn in *Making the Gospel Plain, The Writings of Bishop Reverdy C. Ransom,* shows Ransoms prophetic warning and final encouragement to the AME Church regarding its mission and ministry to its people in his sermon *"The Church That Survives:"*

> While heaven is our final goal, our chief present concern is with life on this planet and human relations in our present society, to the end that the kingdom of God maybe established among men. I see little hope for the survival of the AME Church, or any other distinctly religious Negro denomination, if we do not so apply the gospel of Christ as to make it a vital force in the life of society. While the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League may argue, petition, protest, and appeal, we are clothed with authority to declare, "Thus saith the Lord.[41]

Though Bishop Ransom grew restrained in his latter years, his work and message for social change did not fall on deaf ears. Ransom until his death argued that socialism seeks the common good… it seeks to bring all people to participate in the rivalry of life on a footing of equality, allowing each individual the possibility for development of his powers and personality with the freedom to follow his abilities wherever they may lead.[42] There were several persons who took up the banner of social change, personalities such as Bishop Charles Spencer Smith who made his appearance on the stage of socialism in an article written to the AME Christian Recorder on December 15, 1887 entitled: *Are Our Leaders Dead or Dumb?* "Our leaders must not be silent, for their silence will be an assurance to our oppressors that we are content with our lot. The AME Church

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[41] Anthony B. Pinn, *Making the Gospel Plain: The Writings of Bishop Reverdy C. Ransom*, 158.

[42] Stephen W. Angell and Anthony B. Pinn, *Social Protest Thought in the African Methodist Episcopal Church 1862-1939*, 334-338.

influences, directly or indirectly, at least one fourth of the entire colored population of the country. Quite two million are looking to us for instruction and direction…"[43]

Bishop Smith's question was directed to the members of the AME church, its clergy and its lay people causing them to look deeply into what the church was doing to address the problems and issues that are faced by its members as well as those whom the church is called to serve. His article was meant to prompt a response from church leaders concerning the demands and the supply of needs, are we proving true to our trust? Are we grappling with those economic and civil matters that lie at the foundation of the wellbeing of the people?[44]

His article was timely in regards to what the church was not doing, but also at the same time served as an encouragement to the church to do more. This was however, a prophetic utterance that the writer was able to see in that even in Bishop Smith's time he recognize that the primary concern was not how the church can be socially relevant, but our shameful spectacle that we are presenting to the world by our ceaseless clamor that this or that one shall be made a bishop.[45] Even then the writer's hypothesis regarding the ministry of the church is a question that was asked indirectly in 1887 and is still being asked today: are the ministries of the AME Church relevant to the people we serve? "The hour calls for men of action and might. Let our leaders raise the standard and "Agitate, Agitate, Agitate."[46]

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[43] Stephen W. Angell and Anthony B. Pinn, *Social Protest Thought in the African Methodist Episcopal Church 1862-1939*, 314.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

Then there was Bishop Richard R. Wright a former banker, college president, a Ph.D. and editor of the *AME Christian Recorder* who saw social change to be the calling card for new ministries within the local congregation such as social service. He did not share in total compliance the ideals of socialism, but rather, leaned upon the fact there were, however, distinctions between the two. In an editorial written July 16, 1914 he stated: "Social service in its relation to the church has nothing to do with socialism. Many people confuse the two. The social servant attempts to prevent social disease and to cure the same, i.e., to solve social problems, by working in harmony with the most advanced social laws handed down by sociology. Socialism says that here is one cure for all these ills, and that is for the means of production, the machinery of society, to be the property of the whole."[47]

Wright understood the aspect of social change to be something spiritual, something that was to be embedded in the hearts and minds of the people who knew first hand the inconvenience of our humanity. If the church wanted to be relevant to ministry, then the church should began developing social services that addressed specific issues tailored to the needs of its congregants. "Social service is spiritual and moral betterment. Socialism is the cry of men who would appeal to individual selfishness largely while social work appeals to the idea of brotherhood. Its roots are spiritual. The two are not the same."[48] The last student of Reverdy Ransom was his mentee and surrogate son Bishop Joseph Gomez, whom the writer has directed his research to mimic his work and ministry in a time where social change was needed most, and to revisit that model of ministry as a

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[47] Stephen W. Angell and Anthony B. Pinn, *Social Protest Thought in the African Methodist Episcopal Church 1862-1939*, 345.

[48] Ibid., 346.

means to question the ministry of the AME Church by today's standards, and to influence the AME Church to create more socially relevant ministries that meet the needs of the people whatever the needs may be through the creation of "AOM" acts of ministry.

Joseph Gomez, a native of Antigua and Trinidad, came to the United States in 1908 in search of a better life than was found in his homeland. Though he was an admirer of his father's Catholicism, he was affectionately held captive by his mother's African heritage and her Methodist roots. When he received his call into the ministry, it was without question that he would be a minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The black church in the United States has been and remains the convergent point of the black community.[49] In order to be effective, ministers are required to be multifaceted in their approach, scientific in their methodology, and spiritually inclined in their comprehension of the problems facing the people that they serve. Annetta Louise Gomez-Jefferson stated, "during all these years, in ever-widening arenas, he fought for the well-being of his people on many fronts, including housing, education, the arts, and politics."[50]

Bishop Gomez embraced every one of his charges the lessons learned in the halls of academia and those that were instilled in him from the mouth of the father of social change in the black church, Bishop Reverdy Cassius Ransom. His personal mantra and credo for socially relevant ministry was something he learned having sat at the feet of the Gamaliel of socialism: "you cannot preach God to an empty stomach or to a person who feels he has no pride in or power over his own destiny."[51]

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[49] Vivian L. Holliday, *Classical and Modern Narratives of Leadership* (Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2000), 143.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid., 144.

Gomez was a fundamentalist, a theologian, and rhetorician who had little pleasure for theological or philosophical treaties that did not address the human condition. At all of his ministerial post as pastor, Gomez made himself a staple of the community and fought against the evils that rose up against the advancement of his people. His approach to social change was viewed through his civic involvement. For instance during his pastorate at Bethel AME Church in Detroit, Michigan he created his social service bureau that aided people in finding jobs and lodging for the influx of blacks who were migrating from the south.

In a 1919 study of housing conditions of Negroes in Detroit written by Forrester B. Wash he stated, "The majority of Negroes are living under such crowded conditions that three or four families in an apartment is the rule rather than the exception. Seventy-five percent of the Negro homes have so many lodgers that they are really hotels. Stables, garages, and cellars have been converted into homes for Negroes. The poolrooms and gambling clubs are beginning to charge for the privilege of sleeping on poolroom tables."[52] In response to these alarming results Gomez's Social Service Department was successful in helping hundreds of black people new to Detroit find homes and housing, including Charles Diggs who when he arrived in Detroit with his family only had $6.35. Diggs found assistance from Rev. Gomez's Social Service Bureau. He later became a successful funeral director and a Michigan State Senator, his son Charles Diggs, Jr., became a United States Congressman.[53]

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[52] Vivian L. Holliday, *Classical and Modern Narratives of Leadership,* 145.

[53] Ibid., 146.

Social Change was not just a sociological concept meant for the study of social problems; it was the churches response to the problems plagued by blacks in the Twentieth Century. From issues faced with blacks having a decent place to bury their dead, Gomez and others came together and founded the sixty acre Detroit Memorial Park Association on June 17, 1925. When blacks were being barred from the white ministerial alliance, he took to the print news media condemning them from their egregious error of unchristian segregation, and for their non-condemning of the Klu Klux Klan and their raid of terror upon blacks in that city.

As a pastor in St. Louis, Gomez and Rev. John F. Moreland, an AME Zion pastor, fought against Eden Theological Seminary for not admitting blacks into their school, after much pressure and support from fellow white Christians, they were admitted on July 7, 1934 and became the first members of their race to received a Masters of Sacred Theology. Later as a Bishop in the AME Church he was invited back to be the commencement speaker and received an honorary Doctorate of Divinity on June 5, 1964.

Joseph Gomez did not run from any of life's shadows but saw the dark and bright hours as occasion to expand his understanding of God's will for him and his ministry.[54] His social consciousness led him to fight against the Red Cross's non-acceptance of Negro blood during World War II in 1941, again using the power of the pen and the only sounding board available to him, his pulpit in February 1942. The Red Cross announced that they would begin to accept Blood from Negros.[55] He created social forums as pastor of Bethel Church listing persons such as the controversial, A. Phillip Randolph and

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[54] Vivian L. Holliday, *Classical and Modern Narratives of Leadership,* 152.

[55] Ibid., 148.

Chandler Owens co-editors of *The Messenger*. Additionally, Eugene Kinckle Jones of the National Urban League and co-founder of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., James Weldon Johnson of the NAACP, and William Edward Burghardt DuBois editor of the NAACP's *Crisis Magazine* were utilized in the movement.

As pastor of St. James AME Church in Cleveland, Ohio he became the director of the literary forum addressing the social ills of society, inviting such notable figures as President Harry Ship Truman, Margret Webster, Langston Hughes, Carter G. Woodson, Ralph Locher, Frank Lausche, and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt to the pulpit of St. James. As doubly noted by his daughter Gomez-Jefferson in her book *In Darkness with God: The Life of Bishop Joseph Gomez a Bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church:* "The St. James forum served for 11 years as a sounding board for the continuous discussion of public affairs by some of the ablest men in this city and in the nation, both white and Negro."[56] Like father like son Bishop Reverdy Ransom had been appointed the first black member of the Ohio Board of Parole in 1940 by Gov. Martin L. Davey and during Gomez's tenure as pastor at St. James he assisted in getting paroles for deserving men and women and to find jobs for them after they were released from prison.[57] As a Bishop in the church he never ceased to address the prevailing issues of race, and disharmony as experienced by blacks in Texas, Kentucky, Tennessee, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ontario in Canada, and in Zambia in Central Africa. In a speech to NAACP National Convention held in Chicago he said of the ministry of the AME Church: "These

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[56] Vivian L. Holliday, *Classical and Modern Narratives of Leadership,* 146.

[57] Annetta L. Gomez-Jefferson, *In Darkness with God: The Life of Joseph Gomez, A Bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press), Kindle Ed. Locations 3423-3424.

are times when men must show courage as well as the understanding necessary to properly guide the millions of people who don't quite [comprehend] the urgency of the times… the history of the AME Church and its beginnings reflects the very mood of the present day struggle for freedom."[58] This review of social change from the several areas mention in the introduction of this chapter, along with several key persons who documented their research, and those who by their efforts as leaders in the Methodist movement and the African Methodist Episcopal Church spoke out against the less consorted efforts of the socialism and the social gospel. They spoke to the powers of social change as they understood it and made it resoundingly clear that without it (social change) the ministry of the AME Church will cease to be the Camelot of the African American experience in the fight for religious freedom. The solid footing for racial equality, as well as the sociological answer to a post-modern thought of the churches survival, will come with a shout of victory answering from the balcony of heaven, for the survival of the AME Church will be through our faith in Jesus Christ and our subduing of social problems wrought by the righteousness of a faithful God who shall not be ashamed to be called our God.[59]

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[58] Vivian L. Holliday, *Classical and Modern Narratives of Leadership,* 152.

[59] Stephen W. Angell and Anthony B. Pinn, *Social Protest Thought in the African Methodist Episcopal Church 1862-1939*, 161.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

According to the *The Yale Anchor Bible,* the third chapter of Micah, which is referred to as the Book of Contention and Conciliation, is a conversation that takes the form of a covenant dispute. As it is outlined in the text, God (Yahweh) takes the time to deal with the issues of condemnation and forgiveness. The sixth chapter of Micah begins with a disclosure of God's displeasure. The third chapter of Micah begins with a litany of criminal acts that were committed by God's chosen people. "Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision, and darkness to you, without divination. The sun shall go down on the prophets and the day shall be black over them; the seers shall be disgraced, and the diviners put to shame they shall all cover their lips, for there is no answer from God. But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin," (Micah 3:6-8).

This book presents itself as a divine lawsuit brought against God's elect people. One will immediately witness a trial motif in regards to how this chapter is presented. One important aspect of this literary work is that God does not follow the judicial procedure. There is no actual trial where witnesses are called, and testimonies are heard.

In Micah 6:1-8 there is no formal indictment; Yahweh's speech is not developed along the conventional lines of customary litigation.[1] Nevertheless, God declares his discontentment by charging the people of Israel with contempt of court. Israel was charged with breaking their covenant vow and relationship with God. The mega themes of this minor book of prophesy deal with perverting faith, anticipating the Messiah, overcoming oppression, and pleasing God. Although the sixth chapter of Micah serves as the trail of the people, the themes of contention and conciliation flow through each book. It is important to understand that God wants his people to be like himself, and he never gives up working on this project.[2]

The beginning of Micah six serves as an announcement that Yahweh is about to engage in a dispute or rîb, which is the Hebrew term for contest. A rîb can be personal, legal, or most commonly, simply a dispute. Micah begins chapter six by calling the attention of the people so that they may hear what is troubling God "Hear what the Lord says," (Micah 6:1). Verses one through eight are recognized as a unit in the traditional division of the Masoretic text. The participants in this dramatic dialogue can be identified by certain vocative nouns and pronouns such as "you," "thou," "hills," "mountains," "my people," and "Adam" (man).[3]

There is also no specification of the speaker at any point. The prophet performs a conversation that happens without the appearance of talking to any one specific person. Micah recites for the listening people the charges that God has brought against his

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[1] Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *The Yale Anchor Bible: Micah A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 501.

[2] Ibid. 501.

[3] Ibid., 505.

people. In verses three through five we see a change in which God is clearly speaking to the people when he addresses them as "my people." In verses six through seven we see that another change takes place with no formal identification of the speaker. However, verse eight clearly indicates that it is Micah who reminds the children of Israel of the requirements of God, which were to (1) do justice (*krima*), (2) love kindness (*hesed*) or mercy (*eleos*), and (3) walk modestly with your God. The basis for this Old Testament narrative is primarily verse eight, but in order to see why Micah is reminding the people of the Lord's requirements, it is necessary to know what took place prior to verse eight. The correlation between verses eight and the need for social change within the African Methodist Episcopal Church then becomes clear.

As outlined in the project proposal for this work, the act of ministry (AOM) will serve as the implementation of this Old Testament narrative that will show the direct relationship between the requirements of God and through social awareness, social regeneration and social change. This text will show the reader how these godly requirements can be fulfilled through a AOM that is geared towards rebuilding covenant and communal relationships between God and people, and people and community. It will show the need for justice through social change, which will serve as a response to our relationship with God. By meeting the needs of the people, we will fulfill the requirements of God, which are: "to do justice, love mercy, and to be ready to walk with Kyrios (kindness) thy God."[4]

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[4] Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *The Yale Anchor Bible: Micah A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 504.

Religious Thought

"According to (Martin) Luther, the prophets have a queer way of talking, like people who instead of proceeding in an orderly manner, ramble off from one thing to the next so that you cannot make head or tail of them or see what they are getting at."[5] The Book of Micah, who is the sixth minor prophet in the order of the Masoretic tradition, is full of Hebrew poetry, which can be clearly seen in the three parts that make up this prophetic witness.

Each of the parts begins with a call to attention, an instruction to listen, and then concludes with a promise. Micah, who is often compared to Isaiah by scholars because of his rhetorical eloquence and power, has embedded deep within the text some of the Old Testament's well-known passages of Hebraic scripture.[6] Within the Book of Micah we find the elevation of the mountain of God, the prophecy of a ruler that will emerge from Bethlehem, and the listing of justice, mercy and humility as character traits that God desires to see in human creation.[7]

While Micah is one of those hard-to-understand Hebrew texts, as attested to by scholars, such as Dillard and Longman in *Introduction to the Old Testament*, it is also one of the most memorable texts of the Old Testament. This is primarily because of chapter six, which is an unorthodox trial proceeding where God calls his people, Judah, to account for having broken their covenant vows.

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[5] Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman, III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 397.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

While chapter three deals with the judgment of God regarding broken vows and a covenant relationship, the text also serves as a reminder of what the Lord requires of his people. Chapter seven, however, is the conclusion of the Masoretic text and offers a promise from God to Judah. It is clearly seen in Micah 7:18-20 that the third part of this Hebrew poem is the promise of forgiveness and the establishment of a new covenant with God and his people: "Who is a God like You, forgiving iniquity and remitting transgression; Who has not maintained His wrath forever against the remnant of His own people. Because He loves graciousness! He will take us back in Love; He will cover up our iniquities, you will hurl all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will keep faith with Jacob, loyalty to Abraham, As you promised on oath to our fathers in days gone by." (Micah 7:18-20).

While this exegetical exercise is based on Micah chapter six, it is almost impossible to gain a full understanding of the historically significant text without looking at it from a broader perspective. In order to fully understand what happened and the response to what happened, one has to closely examine this text through broader themes. Although Micah was a minor prophet, his message has become timeless and sacred in its proclamation of what God truly looks for in his people. As powerful as it is, however, this prophetic and literary work has been overlooked because of its complicated Hebrew structure and because Micah's work has been overshadowed by contemporaneous greats such as Isaiah.[8] Micah is without question a poetic titan who with great boldness and compassion acts as God's legal representative dispensing the charges against the people. He reminds them of the requirements of orthodoxy (right belief) and orthopraxy (right

[8] Raymond B. Dillard, and Tremper Longman, III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 400.

practice), and he extends to them the grace of God shown through forgiveness. This in turn reunites them in a lawful covenant with God, which is clearly seen in the conclusion of this Hebrew poem.

Historical, Political and Social Settings

The name Micah, which is common in the Old Testament, and the longer spelling, is Micaiah, which means "Who is like Yahweh?" Moresheth is a village located some twenty miles southwest of Jerusalem, along the edge of rolling hills of the Shephelah, near the coastal plain of Gath.[9] Scholars have determined that Micah's parents were not mentioned because his family may not have been influential or prominent people.

He is also identified in terms mention of where he comes from because his ministry took place in a different location, most likely in Jerusalem. The time in which this minor prophetic witness was written has been determined based on the kings in which reigned during the time of his prophecy. Micah prophesied during the reigns of Jotham (750-732 B.C.), Ahaz (732-716 B.C.), and Hezekiah (716-687 B.C.).[10]

Throughout the entire Old Testament, Micah is only mentioned only one other time outside the book that bears his name. During his ministry, King Jehoiakim and his false prophets threatened Jeremiah with death. It is said that some elders interceded for him and cited Micah as justification for Jeremiah's prophesy of Judgment.[11] Micah was written as part of a group of prophets whose messages addressed two distinctive groups

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[9] Raymond B. Dillard, and Tremper Longman, III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 398.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

of people. Amos and Hosea addressed their prophesies to Israel. Isaiah and Micah addressed their prophesies to Judah. The two kingdoms had become divided after the reign of King Solomon deaths between (926-922 B.C.E.). The ten northern tribes refused to submit to King Rehoboam's authority and as a result they revolted, which resulted in two kingdoms of Hebrews--Israel in the north and Judah in the south.[12] The purpose of the Book of Micah was to warn God's people that judgment for their sins was coming and to offer a pardon to all who would repent. The reference to the judgment began with the downfall of Samaria at the hands of the Assyrian army under the leadership of Shalmaneser, V (722 B.C.).[13]

Although Judah did not rebel during the reign of Sargon II, upon his death his son Sennacherib and Hezekiah joined forces with a rebel leader named Merodach-balagan. Through the ministry of Isaiah and Micah, Hezekiah repented of his sins, and God spared the city from judgment.[14] Most of Micah's prophesy takes place during the destruction of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians in (586 B.C.) and Judah's restoration and deliverance from captivity (539 B.C.).[15]

The social setting of the Book Micah, as previously mentioned, is Jerusalem during the Babylonian captivity. It is interesting that the political situation is described in 2 Kings, chapters fifteen through twenty and 2 Chronicles, chapter's twenty-six through thirty. Micah, who has been identified in comparison to Isaiah, picks up his ministry after

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[12] Richard Hooker, "Ancient Jewish History: The Two Kingdoms," Jewish Virtual Library, accessed June 15, 2013, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/Kingdoms1.html.

[13] Raymond B. Dillard, and Tremper Longman, III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament,* 398-399.

[14] Ibid., 399.

[15] Ibid.

Isaiah's death. Another aspect of the social setting is that this indictment against the people was directed towards Judah. Much of the drama of Micah six reflects years of disobedience, broken vows, and disloyalty on the part of Judah, God's chosen people, hence a trial motif. The word of God that comes from the prophet Micah is not restricted to a select few; the word to Judah now has been applied to the whole earth, including Israel. It is the whole message of God set in a universal and proto-apocalyptic context.[16]

While the whole of the message is for God's people, Micah six serves as God's case against Judah. Since Judah turned against God after the death of Hezekiah and suffered much grief at the hands of Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, Judah felt forsaken and abandoned by God. In the opening of Micah six God calls for their attention, and as witnesses he calls upon the mountains as a testament of the power and sovereignty.

Those mountains, possibly including Mt. Nebo, which was some sixty to seventy miles from Judah, stood as a reminder of where God had placed them. His commitment to the people was found throughout his creation. If God was capable of maintaining creation, certainly he was more than capable of sustaining his people during their moments of trouble and conflict. Those mountains also served as witnesses because they were filled with altars built to the false and idol gods whom they worshiped.

The social aspect of this text can also be viewed in light of God's reproach of his people regarding their social sins. Micah seems to have spent much time in Jerusalem, perhaps as an elder representing his village's interests before the corrupt national bureaucracy. He aimed much of his message toward the same kind of social abuses that

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[16] John Barton and John Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 595.

provoked Amos a few decades earlier.[17] Much of Micah's concern was for the people, who were being oppressed by the religious leaders of that time. While some may read the Book of Micah as a polemic against all priestly religion, Micah's intention was to bring attention to an unhealthy state of affairs in which people esteemed the mere external act of ritual worship and denied any internal change that would cause a move from ritual acts of worship to real worship and observance of His holy ways.

Like the other Eighth Century Prophets, Micah was very much interested in the nature of true religion, which he believed required justice, kindness, and humility, qualities he found altogether lacking in too many of Judah's citizens. Micah identified closely with those who were powerless and at the mercy of corrupt power mongers.[18] In order for Judah to find grace in the presence of God, there had to be a renewed sense of worship, and a commitment to justice, kindness, mercy, and humility.

This Old Testament narrative speaks to the core of this project because it emphasizes those character traits that should be present in our Christological make-up as followers of Christ. The seeds of social change within the context of African Methodism, specifically for the people of Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church, lie deep within the requirements set by God in order to restore covenant relations between God and People. In response to the people, the church has a fiduciary responsibility to seek justice on behalf of those persons living in the community of the church, not only that, but to ensure justice through social change and social regenerations. The words of Micah six are not dead sediment trapped in an inescapable time warp, held hostage by an ever

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[17] Thomas V. Brisco, *Holman Bible Atlas* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998), 141.

[18] Ibid.

changing and modernized society. Those words spoken so eloquently and poetically by the prophet Micah are brought alive by this effort to bring to the attention of the members of Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church, their responsibility towards the people, which is to meet the needs of the people.

New Testament Foundation

The Book of Titus is a letter written to Paul's most loyal disciple and colleague, who were charged with finishing the work of ministry and church planting on the island of Crete. This pastoral epistle was meant to be letters advising Titus about his responsibility of supervising the churches on this little island. While Paul was simply giving instructions for how Titus was to perform his job as bishop or adjutant apostle, Titus was left with the major responsibility of interpreting the mission of Jesus Christ in the face of flawed human traits.

While verse five is the basis for this New Testament biblical foundation, one has to completely understand the preceding four verses so that they will know why Titus has a more difficult job than just finishing the work that he and Paul started. Paul's letter, as encouraging as it appears, gives clear and strict instructions for the course of action that must be taken. Paul reemphasizes his personhood in Christ, and authority given to him by God through Jesus Christ, as an apostle whose sole responsibility is to make solid the foundations of the church. He reminds Titus of the reason for living and affirms his position in Crete as first and foremost a servant of God. Much of the writing found in the book of Titus is very similar to that of First Timothy. Both books give special instructions to these assistants in the ministry, and give clear and decisive orders to those who will be

charged with overseeing the work of ministry. While the first part of this Pauline Epistle reminds Titus of who and what we are as ministers of the gospel of Christ, the focal point for this exegetical work is verse five which specifically lays out the role that we as ministers must adhere to. Paul says to Titus: "This is why I left you in Crete so that you might put what remained into order, … (Titus 1:5).[19]

The intent of this New Testament analysis in light of this project is to impart a deeper understanding of the requirement for church leaders to set in order those things that are lacking. As for Titus, he was faced with a group of people who were mainly concerned with the ritualistic aspect of religion; they failed to realize that the appropriate response to Christendom was and is self-denial and service. Hence, the longer and more formal opening found in Titus. Paul, who used several customary greetings, saw the need to emphasize the role and responsibilities of Titus while in Crete, lest he forgot why he was left there in the first place. Titus had one task and that was to ensure that churches were supplied with real and authentic leadership and that there was one universal understanding of how one might obtain salvation, which was through the sacrifice and acceptance of Jesus Christ.

As a New Testament response to creating Social Change within the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and more specifically, Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church, our responsibilities as pastor and leaders is to ensure that leaders set in place those that will adhere to the mission of the church, and that a shared ethos and theology is preached and taught consistently without deviating from purpose, which is to meet the needs of the people.

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[19] Jay P. Green, Sr. *The Interlinear Bible: Hebrew-Greek-English* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 926.

Religious Thought

"This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, …" Titus 1:5. The principle thought and understanding for this particular book has much to do with the reason that Titus was left to attend the needs and issues for the fairly new church in Crete. Titus was deliberately left behind in Crete to carry out a specific assignment. Prior to his departure his assignment was orally delivered, now it is restated concisely in writing. The task at hand was a comprehensive one, to straighten out the issues that were present, and to finish the work of establishing the Cretan Church.[20] Most of this Pauline Epistle provides significant information regarding the formal organization of the church, and the general thought and understanding of doing ministry, following the ministry of Jesus Christ. Part of the reason Paul chose not to open this letter using his normal formal greeting, which included the blessing of grace and peace, was so that he might remind Titus of the need for service, also that he might not forget that he is nothing more than a servant, who has been commissioned to fulfill the mandates left behind in Matthew 28:19-20: "Going, then, disciple all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things, whatever I commanded you. And, behold, I am with you all the days until the completion of the age. Amen."[21]

The opening greeting to Titus, however, is longer and fuller than the preceding books in First and Second Timothy. The letter to Titus is more intentional in its greeting

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[20] Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger, III, *The Expositors Bible Commentary, Abridged Edition: New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers, 1994), 922.

[21] Jay P. Green, Sr., *The Interlinear Bible: Hebrew-Greek-English* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 766.

because it lays out the purpose and intent of Titus's actions. Paul in his greetings to Titus purposely includes a summary of the gospel message, which is the idea of God's plan of salvation.[22] As a means to validate Titus's role in establishing the Cretan Church, not only is a summary of the gospel message included in the greeting, but also as an added measure of faith, Paul asserts that message with a character trait of God, which is a reminder that God never lies.

Crete was a fairly small island in the Mediterranean Sea, and had a large population of Hellenistic Jews. The churches there were most likely founded by Cretan Jews who had experienced Pentecost while in Jerusalem in (30 A.D.) The time frame for this Pauline letter is after Paul was released from Rome around (62 A.D.) It is suggested that after his release from Rome he journeyed to the island of Crete, as well as to Ephesus and then to Macedonia.[23] Paul considers Titus one of his sons in the ministry. In the usual interpretation between the two, Titus is characterized as Paul's loyal child. Like Timothy, Titus is considered to be a legitimate successor of Paul's ministry.[24] He is left behind to complete the work started by the both of them; therefore the letter to Titus is nothing more than a letter of advisement and encouragement for the work of missions.[25] Titus's job is clearly seen in verse five, in the following verses, however Paul lists a specific set of guidelines for how Titus is to proceed in placing qualified persons in positions of leadership in every city. Because Paul and Titus could not physically oversee the work of each church, Titus was empowered to choose from among the people leaders who met the

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[22] John Barton and John Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1231.

[23] David S. Dockery, *Holman Bible Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1992), 742.

[24] John Barton and John Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 1231.

[25] Ibid., 742.

specific criteria for leadership, and to place them in charge of those churches in each city, to oversee the work and to ensure that the mission and message was being properly taught. There are several reasons that Paul has instructed Titus to act in this regard. Scholars have suggested that because of the influence of Roman lifestyle, false doctrine was being taught in the churches. This had caused a rift in the ministry and a misinterpretation of the gospel message. The work that Titus has to complete starts first with setting the house in order and making sure that the continuity of the message was not being subverted by the influence of Roman lifestyle, and the philosophical understandings and teachings of those Hellenistic Jews living in the area.

Titus 1:5 speak volumes as to what we are required to do as pastor and leaders within our congregations. Clearly and specifically we are instructed to set the house in order, by placing qualified persons in leadership positions. One of the many downfalls in ministry, specifically, Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church, is that often persons who possess leadership qualities and attributes are entrusted with assisting with the work of ministry, but whose personal understanding of the mission of the church is severely lacking, and are entrusted with assisting with the work of ministry.

Within the structure of Wayman AME Church the role of the steward is first to assist the pastor in caring for the souls of the congregation, which is a major problem, because not many members have a real understanding of the gospel message, or the commission set by Matthew 28 and the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The goal now is to utilize the instructions found in Titus 1 to reassess those persons who are currently serving in leadership, and then to set in order that which is lacking.

Historical, Political and Social Settings

The epistolary literature of the New Testament consists of twenty-one writings that display the formal features of a letter to varying degrees, along with letters embedded in other books.[26] The openings of these letters included three parts, the author, the addressee, and the greeting. The greeting, however, was a wishful hope pertaining to the purpose of the letter, as well as any other prayer-wish the writer wanted to convey.[27]

The body of the letter included the purpose and was more elaborate in its content. In regards to Titus, the first chapter, the body of Paul's letter was intended to empower Titus to finish the work that was left behind in Crete, and to set in order those things that were lacking. The close of the letter consisted of a final greeting, to including a second or final word of encouragement and a prayer-wish directed towards the addressee and the purpose of the letter.[28]

Also, a part of the epistolary literature was the paraenesis of the Pauline letters. Paraenesis being simply an exhortatory composition was Paul's way of tailoring a general letter to a specific situation. Though Paul is known to have used traditional materials from Jewish and Hellenistic traditions, it was not an obscure fact that he did not intend to develop a Christian moral system.[29] Paul uses paraenesis so that he could provide Titus, not with a rulebook for solving every problem, but rather, examples or illustrations of

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[26] W. Randolph Tate, *Interpreting the Bible: A Handbook of Terms and Methods* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 118.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] W. Randolph Tate, *Interpreting the Bible: A Handbook of Terms and Methods*, 122.

how the gospel was to take effect.[30] Those sections of the letters, or paraenesis, were designed to offer a practical understanding of the information contained therein, and to make any additional request, or to offer reminders for what was to be done while in Crete.

Within the letter to Titus, we can see that Paul's use of this Jewish or, Hellenistic style of writing resulted in a three-part letter. First Paul offers a greeting or a statement that has very little inherent connection to the rest of the letter. Nevertheless, because Paul is trying to create a moral Christian system of conveying the message of Jesus Christ, he offers a summary of the gospel message.

The second part of the letter listed those things that were considered to be of major importance, as Paul wanted to make clear to Titus why he was left behind in Crete, which is seen in verse five was for Titus's first to fix those matters that were causing disruption in the Cretan churches. False teachers and leaders who were more sensitive to the prevailing culture and not the gospel message caused some of the disruptions. Therefore, the second part of Paul's letter to Titus was a list of virtues and vices, in a style of writing borrowed from the Hellenistic culture, but including a general explanation that was directed towards Titus's situation. The third part of his paraenesis is in a style that is strictly Paul's. Paul employed what was called a homiletical exhortation centering on Titus's appointing leaders in the various cities whose lifestyle matched the criteria found in verses six through nine.

These homiletical exhortations were intended to show concern with how Christians should live in the world on a day-to-day basis. They were not unique to the New Testament but were part of a general Hellenistic cultural milieu in which these

[30] W. Randolph Tate, *Interpreting the Bible: A Handbook of Terms and Methods*, 122.

exhortations became part of the Cretan church's daily life.[31] Exhortations such as that of Titus 2:1-10, where Paul speaks of those character traits that should be found within church people, can not appropriately be stated without the presence of a passage such as Titus 1:5-9, where the qualifications are outlined for those who would wish to be in service to the church.

The significance of Paul's letter to Titus is primarily to the culture of the people living in Crete. Crete, which is now called Candia, is one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean, about 140 miles long and thirty-five miles wide. It was at one time a very prosperous and populous island, having a "hundred cities" not much is known about this city, aside from its close association with a Roman Lifestyle, coupled with its Hellenistic and Jewish Culture.[32] Many of the residents of Crete, however, were as Paul described them in Titus 1:12-13: "Cretans are always liars, vicious, brutes, lazy gluttons." This character assessment as described by Paul was serious enough that the qualification for leaders had to be set forth in order to maintain some legitimacy in the ministry. Therefore, Paul in his homiletical exhortation to Titus mentions the city name as a symbolic reference to the difficulty of administering the church in different contexts.[33] One thing was certain; the culture of the Church in Crete stood a chance of becoming heavily infected by the growing fascination with cultic rituals and practices. Due to Crete's large population, many of the people like Paul were accustom to stopping in Crete as a rest stop on the way to some other place. Therefore, the people there were

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[31] W. Randolph Tate, *Interpreting the Bible: A Handbook of Terms and Methods*, 197.

[32] M. G. Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, 1893).

[33] Gail R. O'Day and David L. Petersen, *Theological Bible Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminister John Knox Press, 2009), 444.

susceptible to outside cultural influence. The message to Titus was sent in light of the encroaching tsunami of culture that was beginning to influence the culture of the church. A relaxed understanding of the gospel message that was infused with the philosophical understandings of that era began to take precedence over the message Paul and Titus had begun to teach upon their first visit to this metropolitan area. The instructions found in Paul's letter to Titus were meant to reinforce the cultural code with sound doctrine and understanding.

It was Paul's intention to empower Titus to address these issues without delay so that the message of God would not be discredited or diluted with false doctrine. Part of the mission of this project is to set in order those things that are lacking in Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church's ministry action plan. The goal of this project through the lens of both the Old and New Testament scriptures is to bring attention to our mission of meeting the needs of the people. The Old Testament texts sheds light on the requirements of God for humanity, which are to do justice, love, mercy, and walk humbly with God; the message of the New Testament text is designed to place in action those very requirements. Within the context of Wayman and the city of Wheeling, there is a lack of justice, an appreciation for the quality of life, which we can often see through the guise of love and kindness. People have begun to fall from the church because they feel that the church is lacking in the area of love and kindness. The church should be the place where all people are welcome, and received, and where they can experience God as they come to understand God in a more full and fulfilled way.

In light of the last requirement, theologians have interpreted walking humbly with God to mean walking carefully, or prudently. It means to walk with God in humility, but goes much further than that.[34] The message of Paul to Titus is a message of relevance to the city of Wheeling and the pastor and leaders of Wayman AME Church. As a pastor, I am required by the Episcopal order of Methodism to set in order those things that are lacking in the church.

It is my task to ensure that the gospel message is not perverted by the influence of popular culture, and that the people in the church and the community are given every measure of the word of God to be empowered beyond their current situations. The order of the day is set by this text: "The reason I left you in Crete was so that you might attend to the matters still not in order." Both the church and the community are suffering from an incursion of a culture that is devoid of these biblical truths found both in Micah and Titus. The need for social holiness, which is the response of the church, must be channeled through a broad scope of social change directed towards social regeneration. Social holiness begins in Christian community, and, therefore, has everything to do with the internal life of the church. The fellowship of believers is the place where social holiness is cultivated and exercised, but it also spills over the boundaries of the church and reaches out to those who are outside of the fellowship. As Methodists, we are held to an even deeper expectation to be martyrs and servants. Thus, it is true that the world hears the gospel when it sees it in action, when its witnesses are clearly concerned with human existence and clearly committed to a more fully human future.

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[34] John Barton and John Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 598.

Historical Foundations

From a historical perspective, social change has deep roots within the context of the Methodist Church movement. This chapter provides a chronological tracking of the term "social change" and identifies some of the persons responsible for disseminating the concept and translating it into action. John Wesley used the term during his ministry from 1738 until his death in 1791. For practicing Methodists, it was understood that social change, or as Wesley referred to it, social holiness, the medium for applying scripture to human action, was to be the basis for ministry within the Methodist tradition. Social holiness was, in fact, the actual term used *by John Wesley* to refer to the work that social change performs. Social change, in sociology, refers to the alteration of mechanisms within the social structure, characterized by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behavior, social organizations, or value systems.[35] In this paper, following Wesley, I use the terms social change and social holiness interchangeably.

Not only is there a psychological approach to holiness, there is also a sociological approach to its deeper understanding. John Wesley in his sermon on Matthew 5:13-16 says: "there's no such thing as a solitary Christian. Christian life is life in community; in the fellowship of the Spirit we call the church."[36] There is the unexpected meaning for the people of God in the very term "sociology." It is derived from the Latin word *sociare*, "to associate with," and *socius*, "a companion or associate." It is the study of the forms

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[35] *Encyclopedia Britannica,* s.v. "social structure," accessed January 10, 2014, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/550924/social-change.

[36] "The Sociological Interpretation of Holiness," The Wesley Center Online: Interpreting Christian Holiness, accessed January 18, 2014, http://wesley.nnu.edu/other-theologians/westlake-taylor-purkiser/interpreting-christian-holiness-w-t-purkiser/interpreting-christian-holiness-chapter-v/.

and functions of human association.[37] The sociological approach that was to be applied through the medium of social holiness or change was to better define the church's role in people's lives. The psychological approach to holiness considers the individual in all the richness and diversity of his personal life while the sociological approach considers the interrelations of persons in community and church.[38] What psychology is to the individual, sociology is to people in groups.

Historically, Methodism has its roots in a group known as the Holy Club, organized in 1729 by brothers John and Charles Wesley at Oxford University. Members of the group pledged to be disciplined about their spiritual lives and also to perform works of social service such as visiting prisons and the poor. Because they were so methodical in how they went about these activities, other students called them *"Methodists"* as an insult. However, they soon adopted this term as a badge of honor, and used it to describe the wider spiritual movement that they founded after having transforming religious experiences in 1738.[39]

Because that religious experience led to their spiritual awakening, which John Wesley called *"the strange warming of the heart,"* both he and Charles were confronted with the challenge of social work and recognized it to be an essential, inseparable part of the Christ life.[40] As a result, their social involvement at Oxford developed essentially at four points: in the two city prisons in Oxford, among poor families, in the workhouse,

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] "Questions About Methodism," Methodist Library FAQs, accessed January 17, 2014, http://www.drew.edu/library/methodist/faq.

[40] Manfred Marquardt, *John Wesley Social Ethics: Praxis and Principals* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 23.

and in a school for underprivileged children.[41] What led John and Charles Wesley and their associates in the path for social change was their personal motivation to imitate Jesus Christ and to fulfill Christ's commandments. It was also their way of striving for the blessedness of God through commitment to the higher goal of saving souls. It was their fundamental belief that obedience to Christ's undisputed authority was connected with the worthy goal of one's blessedness.[42]

They understood more than most the practicality of the gospel message. What is the point of preaching salvation when the person before you is hungry? Wesley knew that if he was to gain his brother he must first meet his need. This reasoning was axiomatic to Methodism, which was hinged completely on social holiness or change as a form of ministering God's word to God's people. It was Wesley's fundamental understanding that Methodism was to be an evangelical movement that encouraged people to experience Christ on a personal level.[43]

The goal of the Methodist movement was not to create an alternative religion or denomination separate from the Church of England. In *The Story of American Methodism,* Frederick Norwood writes in chapter two, *"The Wesleyan Movement,"* that John Wesley fought to prevent the establishment of a separate denomination, a new *"Church."* The members of the United Societies of the People Called Methodist could still regard themselves as good Anglicans (Church of England) indeed and were urged to view themselves as such.

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[41] Manfred Marquardt, *John Wesley Social Ethics: Praxis and Principals* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 24.

[42] Ibid., 25.

[43] "John Wesley," Wikipedia, accessed February 3, 2010, http://en.wikipedia .org/wiki/John_Wesley.

John Wesley's blending of social holiness and the Christian response towards human suffering as well as the *inconvenience* of one's own humanity was his understanding of how the work of God became tangible in the lives of people. It was not for the development of a new denomination, but rather to encourage social consciousness and awareness of human sufferings, which has remained as a hallmark of the Methodist tradition.

Wesley, who never renounced his ties with the Church of England, provided for the incorporation and legal continuation of the new movement.[44] Though he never became a Methodist, Wesley instituted a movement that would shape the mission and ministry of the new world, the New World as Europeans called this hemisphere, and for generations of followers to come. During his mission trip to Georgia, he led the way to practice of ministry whose chief response towards the gospel message was to meet the needs of the people first. John Wesley, who was simple in appearance, and in speaking, made a powerful impact on the world. Henry Moore, his biographer, and intimate friend, says that when he first heard Wesley preach, he thought it strange that a man who spoke with such simplicity should have made so much noise in the world.[45] The breadth, length, and depth of the Methodist movement was to bring awareness to the plight and suffering of the human race.

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[44] "Methodism and the Wesleys," Well Brock, accessed January 18, 2014, http://www.1wellbrock.org/methodism.htm.

[45] John Telford, "The Life of John Wesley by John Telford - Chapter 20," Wesley Center Online, accessed January 18, 2014, http://wesley.nnu.edu/?id=102.

Each of the eighty current branches of Methodism is independent and different from every other, but collectively they share one foundational belief that in the providence of God, Methodism was raised up to spread scriptural holiness throughout the world, to invite people to the belief that "the gospel of Christ knows no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness."[46]

Social Change in the African Methodist Episcopal Church

In time, members of the black community would find the inclusiveness of the Methodist church to meet not only their religious needs, but their need for spiritual maturity, discipline and social order with a unique diversification. As the Methodist movement moved further north, many members of the black community began to join local parishes seeking to exercise their faith in the Methodist tradition.

One of the most influential was Richard Allen, founder, and first bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Richard Allen was born in Philadelphia, PA on February 14, 1760, as a slave to Mr. Benjamin Chew. While he characterized his master like good master, Richard Allen longed to be free, and thus to be his own person. His spiritual conversion would take place at the age of seventeen, after hearing the word of God preached by a Methodist circuit rider. In his autobiography, he said of his conversion, "One night I thought hell would be my portion. I cried unto Him who delighted to hear the prayers of a poor sinner, and all of a sudden my dungeon shook, my chains flew off, and glory to God, I cried. My soul was filled. I cried, enough for me--the

[46] Lovett H. Weems, Jr., *Pocket Guide to John Wesley's Message Today*, 72.

Savior died."[47] By his testimony, Richard Allen went about sharing the good news of salvation. Shortly after his conversion, he joined the Methodist Society and began attending class meetings that were *taught* by John Gray, at the home of Benjamin Wells in Philadelphia, PA. As a result of having joined the Methodist Society, Allen went about evangelizing to his friends and neighbors, and was even permitted to invite preachers to his master's house to preach to him, the other slaves, and the master himself. During this time Richard and his brother were slaves owned by Mr. Stokeley who began allowing field preachers to come and preach to his salves. Not long after, Mr. Stokeley began joining those services held on his plantation. As a result of hearing the word preached by Freeborn Garretson, Mr. Stokeley, and his family were converted. As a result of his master's conversion in 1783 both he and his brother were given the opportunity to purchase their freedom at the cost of $2,000.00 each.

For the next six years, Allen traveled the Methodist circuit, throughout South Carolina, New York, Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania, preaching to black and white congregants alike. He worked as a sawyer and wagon driver when he needed to earn money.[48] The birth of the African Methodist Episcopal Church came as a result of the open disrespect that was experienced by Richard Allen and others at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia. It was while praying that Richard Allen and Absalom Jones and others were abruptly pulled from their knees and forced to return to the segregated seating for blacks only, which was in the balcony of the church.

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[47] "The Life Experience and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Reverend Richard Allen," Documenting the American South, accessed January 21, 2014, http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/allen/allen.html.

[48] "People and Events, Richard Allen 1760 - 1831," PBS, accessed January 21, 2014, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part3/3p97.html.

What happened next gave birth to a separate denomination not based on theological difference or the style and practicality of worship, but in response to racial injustice, and the harsh manner in which persons of color were treated. After being pulled from their knees during prayer, Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and William White, along with other black worshippers, left out of St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church never to return again. Bethel AME Church was founded out of social protest, rather than theological disagreement. Unlike many of the churches today, which are started because of mundane and minute issues over leadership, worship styles, and individuals' opinions about how the church should be run, Bishop Allen founded Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church so that people of color could have a place to worship God, and the freedom to do so without regard to race, color, or creed. Throughout its many years of existence, Bethel Church has remained as a beacon of light and hope, and has stood as a protector of human rights, human dignity, and social change. Bishop Allen saw to it that Bethel met the needs of the people by creating schools and social aid programs, following the practices of the Free African Society, which preceded the founding of the AME Church. The Free African Society, founded by Allen and Jones on April 12, 1787, was a mutual aid society providing assistance to the sick, widows, orphans, and help with the burying of the dead for families regardless of religious affiliation.[49]

The mission and purpose of the AME Church began first with its mother church and founder and first bishop. The pathway towards being a socially relevant church was set by Bishop Richard Allen and has since been maintained by various persons throughout the church's history, such as Bishops Reverdy Cassius Ransom and Joseph

[49] "A Brief History of Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church: Upon this Rock," Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, accessed January 22, 2014, http://www.motherbethel.org/content.php?cid=112.

Gomez. Bishops Ransom and Gomez were not afraid to ask the arduous questions regarding the needs of the people, how the church was expected to meet those needs, and was the church relevant to the people and culture served.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church began to find its basis for ministry in the area of social change, including the work of social holiness, which was conducted through the medium of applying scripture to human action, two different ideas, but similar in nature, both ideas serving as the principle purpose for Methodism in their own distinctive and unique ways. While it may have been that John Wesley wanted to create a movement that was reflective of the life teachings of Jesus Christ, he nevertheless, created a new denomination of Christian believers separate from the Church of England. The purpose, however, remains the same for those who would be called Methodist to imitate the teachings of Jesus Christ in service the world. As verified by Lovett H, Weems in *John Wesley's Message Today*, Weems makes it profoundly clear that during John Wesley's revivals in 1784, he stressed the seriousness of the relationship with Christ, not just a religious relationship, but also a personal one. It is from that relationship with Christ that we gain a better understanding of the teachings of Jesus Christ, and our human response towards our neighbor "the gospel of Christ knows no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness."[50]

The Ministry of Bishop Joseph Gomez

During the ministry of Bishop Joseph Gomez of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, which spanned fifty-eight years, twenty-four of them as a bishop, he used his fundamental understanding of the term social change not only from a sociological

[50] Lovett H. Weems, Jr., *Pocket Guide to John Wesley's Message Today,* 72.

viewpoint, but from a hermeneutical perspective as well. While retaining this term and the tenets of its teachings, Bishop Joseph Gomez, found a more practical way of applying social holiness towards a group of people who best benefited from it. Gomez, a student of Bishop Reverdy C. Ransom, made a personal distinction between the two terms, and began to use the term social change as a means to clarify the difference between social holiness church's response to society, and social change society's response towards society.

This change was significant because Ransom and Gomez understood the need for blending the church and the community together in order to affect the good. As Annetta Louise Gomez-Jefferson, Bishop Gomez's daughter, noted, "The black church in the U.S. A. has been and remains the convergent point of the black community."[51] Therefore, the emphasis in the two terms was needed in order to reach the goal of blending church and community without denying the personal needs of individuals in the life of the black church and the black community.

Bishop Reverdy C. Ransom, who is the Father of Social Change in both the black church and the black community, and who inspired Bishop Joseph Gomez's ministry, was born in Flushing, OH on January 4, 1861 to Harriet Ransom and George Warner Ransom. He entered Wilberforce University on September 1881, and after graduation on June 7, 1886, began his ministry as a pastor in Selma, OH. From 1896-1924, Ransom served the AME church as a pastor and community servant, addressing the needs of the people he encountered through the teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the social

[51] Vivian L. Holiday, *Classical and Modern Narratives of Leadership*, 143.

gospel movement.[52] The social gospel movement was an effort led by a group of liberal Protestant progressives to respond to the social problems raised by the rapid industrialization, urbanization, and increasing immigration of the Gilded Age (1877-1929).[53] The social gospel movement differentiated itself from earlier Christian reform movements by prioritizing service to others over self-service. Although the ministers and activists of the gospel based their appeals on liberal theology, which emphasized the immanence of God the doctrine of incarnation and valued good works over creeds, they usually showed more interest in social science than in theology.[54]

Believing that laissez-faire capitalism understanding of labor as a commodity and its sole reliance on mechanisms of supply and demand to determine wages and allocate resources was un-Christian, social gospel advocates supported the labor movement and called for an interventionist welfare state.[55] They differed from secular activists in that their ultimate vision was not just a more equitable balance of power within society, but a Christianized society in which cooperation, mutual respect, and compassion replaced greed, competition, and conflict among social and economic classes.

The religious social-reform movement in the United States was prominent from 1870 to 1920 among liberal Protestant groups. Despite all of their efforts to reach the working class and to cooperate with the labor movement, however, the social gospel movement failed to reach far beyond its middle-class liberal Protestants' milieu.

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[52] Annetta L. Gomez-Jefferson, *The Sage of Tawawa, Reverdy Cassius Ransom 1861-1959* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2002), 1-22.

[53] "The World's Leading Q & A Site: Reference Answers," Answer.com, assessed on February 5, 2010, http://www.answers.com/topic/social-gospel.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

Ultimately, the greatest achievement of the social gospel movement was to prepare the ground of middle-class America for progressivism. The social gospel movement focused on applying moral principles to the improvement of industrialized society and particularly to reforms such as the abolition of child labor, a shorter workweek, and factory regulation. Many of its aims were realized through the rise of organized labor and New Deal legislation.[56] The New Deal served as President Roosevelt's response to the decline in the American economy. Through the New Deal, he was able to offer jobs and social assistance programs that would provide for better living for those persons who were struggling because of the Great Depression. This government program gave the social gospel movement its agenda and its plan of action despite the fact that everyone was suffering from the Great Depression.

Persons in charge of the disposition of Federal Aid, found ways to ignore and overlook the black community. In *The Social Teachings of the Black Church*, Peter Paris outlines what Bishop Ransom considered to be the main agenda for the black church:

> While heaven is our final goal, our chief present concern is with life on this planet and human relations in our present society, to the end that the kingdom of God may be established among men. I see little hope for the survival of the A. M. E. Church, or any other distinctly religious Negro denomination, if we do not so apply the Gospel of Christ as to make it a vital force in the life of society. While the National Association for the Advancement of Colored people and the Urban League may argue, petition, protest, and appeal, we are clothed with authority to declare, "Thus saith the Lord."[57]

Paris's understanding of the social gospel was that it was a new truth being preached, but it spoke nothing of the change that truth intended to bring.

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[56] "The World's Leading Q & A Site: Reference Answers," Answer.com, assessed on February 5, 2010, http://www.answers.com/topic/social-gospel.

[57] Peter J. Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press 1985), 96.

On the other hand, Bishop Reverdy Ransom held that black church leaders were to commit to a common societal vision namely a society that acknowledges as significant neither race, color, nationality, class or station. This was his opinion in the late 1930's, and it is where, for him, the social gospel became social change. The social gospel movement lacked the influence on society that social change could create. While it is our Christian duty to meet the needs of society, whatever those needs may be, there is still a larger fiduciary responsibility to change those situations that pose a threat to social equity and social reform.

Bishop Ransom understood that the social gospel movement only changed the present dangerous conditions and circumstances, but did not address the future. He received notoriety for his involvement in the social gospel movement when he introduced socialism to the AME Church in 1896 with his public endorsement of it in the A. M. E. Church Review. His relationship to the social gospel movement would have the greatest impact during his pastorate in Chicago, where he founded Institutional AME Church in 1900.

At that time, working along with Ransom was Richard R. Wright. He and Ransom served as pastors in the Chicago area, where they participated in the social relief efforts directed towards people with low incomes on the south side of Chicago. Wright was a pastor in the suburban Chicago area and was heavily involved in the social gospel movement. It was there that Reverdy Ransom gained a fundamental understanding of the meaning of the social gospel as he saw the concept put to use in programs that targeted the major areas of concern within the community. Eventually, both men became bishops in the AME Church. Wright served as a bishop in the AME Church from 1936 to 1964.

He was editor of the *Christian Recorder* from 1909 to 1920, and was president of Wilberforce University from 1932-1936 and again from 1941-1942. Ransom was elected bishop in 1924 and 1936 respectively.

For Ransom, it was necessary to produce social change and reform that would prevent the downfall of communities and that would allow the church to grow and prosper in other targeted areas of change. I believe this is where, theoretically, preaching takes place. It was not enough to speak the truth to light, that truth must take wings to new heights if any good was to come of it. The fundamental change of agenda from the social gospel to social change had led to Ransom's campaign for Social Change, which was revealed through the ministry of his apprentice, Bishop Joseph Gomez. Gomez attempted all of his life to addressing the issues and problems that faced the all the American people, not just a select few. While it is the AME Church mission to meet the needs of society by meeting the needs of those whom we encounter through community living, if we are to affect change in the areas where change is most needed then we must do so not just by healing sick individuals, but by eradicating the disease. Bishop Joseph Gomez whose ministry and explication of the terms social holiness and social gospel or change have inspired this research and has called for a deeper look into the African Methodist Episcopal Church's response to the people we serve today.

Bishop Gomez thought and believed that a minister in such an institution is required to be multi-faceted in his or her approach to leadership in order to be effective. Bishop Joseph Gomez's ministerial career lasted well over fifty years. He served twenty-four of those years as the bishop and general superintendent in the Tenth (Texas), Thirteenth (Kentucky and Tennessee), Fourth (Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ontario in

Canada), and the Seventeenth (Zambia in Central Africa) Episcopal Districts of the AME Church. During those years, he served the needs of the church and community on many fronts including housing, education, the arts, and politics.[58]

As a pastor, he addressed the needs of the people by developing ministries that specifically targeted certain areas within the local congregation and within the community where he served. One of the many issues that we often encounter in our communities is the desire to be effective in the church where we serve, but we are ineffective in the community where we live and interact. Dr. Robert Walker, a senior mentor in the Doctor of Ministry degree program at United Theological Seminary and former executive director of the Wesley Center in Dayton OH, stated, "many people tithe to their church and church community, but as agents of change we have a responsibility to tithe to the community where we live as well." The point of tithing goes beyond the mere giving of money, but calls for the giving of our time and talent, not just to our church and church community, but at the place where we take up residence.

Joseph Antonio Guminston Gomez, who throughout his lifetime was called the "little giant," began his journey in 1890 in Willikies, a remote village on the island of Antigua in the Caribbean. He was the first son of Rebecca Richardson, who was of African descent, and Manoel Gomes, a Portuguese merchant.[59] He began his ministerial career in 1911 as a student at Wilberforce University, in Wilberforce, OH. During his time in Wilberforce, he prepared himself academically for a lifetime of service to both God and his fellow brothers and sisters in the struggle for social equality and justice.

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[58] Vivian L. Holiday, *Classical and Modern Narratives of Leadership,* 143.

[59] Ibid.

Gomez was never known for doing anything in a small ordinary way. For instance on June 18, 1914, he graduated from Payne Theological Seminary at Wilberforce University, was ordained a minister, married Hazel Thompson of Toledo, OH and was sent to his first charge in Bermuda, all on the same day.[60]

During his impressive fifty plus years of ministerial service to the African Methodist Episcopal Church and society, Gomez manifested his leadership in various ways. His primary but not exclusive concerns were the spiritual well being of his congregations, the civil and economic rights of Negroes, and the belief that we must continue to develop our culture while contributing to American and world culture. In an article written by the *A. M. E. Review* in April 1931, he said, "Each race should be given fullest opportunity to develop its particular genius, and make its distinct contribution…the real history of any race is the record of its distinctive contributions."[61]

It is the work of Joseph Gomez that provides the foundation for this research and the lens through which to view the social, ethical, and historical significance of the term social change. His genius is found in his personal creed for service, "You cannot preach God to an empty stomach or to a person who feels he has no pride in or power over his own destiny."[28] Joseph Gomez wasn't a fundamentalist; he had no desire or use for theological treaties that did not address the human condition. He was simply interested in symbolic truths of the Bible.[62] His aim was to address not only the problem, but also the source of the problem. As a pastor, he created social service bureaus within his churches

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[60] Vivian L. Holiday, *Classical and Modern Narratives of Leadership,* 144.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

that served as a community agency to address the struggles of the people of the church and community. For instance when he was appointed pastor of Bethel AME Church in Detroit, MI in 1919, at the age of twenty-nine, Gomez was given the important responsibility of overseeing a historic pulpit with a membership of two thousand plus.

Snidely the people referred to him and Hazel T. as "the boy preacher and his baby wife."[63] Although it was an impressive appointment, it was unusual and out of the ordinary for a young preacher to be given such an important church. Gomez, who proved to be the master builder and the able prognosticator of the gospel, increased the church's membership to over three thousand, added a second morning service, and drew up plans to build a "Greater Bethel." Gomez not only surpassed his contemporaries by adding to the church's membership, he also revitalized the community when he organized a social service department at Bethel Church to help people find jobs and lodging for the influx of blacks who migrated from the south. Furthermore, on June 17, 1925 he and twelve other affluent blacks founded the Detroit Memorial Park Association.[64]

The founding of this black-owned-and-operated cemetery came in response to Gomez's desire to see black people have a decent place to bury their dead. Due to the pressing racial tension and racial divide in the city, black people had a difficult time burying their dead. Even when they were allowed, it was in a remote wooded area or corners of white cemeteries. Gomez boasted about his small investment in this cemetery; it was the only stock where he received steady dividends.

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[63] Vivian L. Holiday, *Classical and Modern Narratives of Leadership,* 145.

[64] Ibid., 146.

More so it was symbolic of the Negro's struggle to have power over his or her destiny.[65] One example of the success that was reaped due to Gomez's social service plan was the success of one Mr. Charles Coles Diggs, Sr., who moved from the south to Detroit with his wife and son with only $6.35. Joseph Gomez was able to convince a local doctor named Dr. Rainwater to allow Diggs and his family to stay in one of his apartments for a month free of rent. Diggs would eventually become a successful funeral director and make a successful bid for Michigan State Legislature. His son, Charles Coles Diggs, Jr., would go on to serve as a United States Congressman from Michigan. One of the things that were clear to Bishop Gomez was that the pastor had a social responsibility as well as a spiritual responsibility to the people he served. Much like his mentor Bishop Ransom, he felt that in order to more proactively serve God, he had to serve the total person, meeting the needs of the individual mind, body, and soul.

Celebrated philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau was of the opinion that [as] Christians are too concerned with the future to be socially responsible in the present world.[66] While this is a polemical point, John Wesley, Reverdy Ransom, and Joseph Gomez felt that Christians were ideal citizens and were a positive influence in the world. It was their desire that Methodism produce the kind of Christians that would fulfill their moral obligation and serve their fellow human beings.[67] This was essentially the main objective of social holiness or social change. However, there is another aspect of this public theology that stemmed from the uses of social regeneration, which was, in theory,

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[65] Vivian L. Holiday, *Classical and Modern Narratives of Leadership*, 144.

[66] Irv A. Brendlinger, *Social Justice Through the Eyes of Wesley: John Wesley's Theological Challenge to Slavery* (Ontario, Canada: Joshua Press, 2006), 129.

[67] Ibid., 130.

the plan of action for social change. John Wesley's idea of the future world was not as a soporific for the miseries of this [current] world, but an incentive to be involved in relieving those miseries and responsibly changing the negative situations of society.[68] Historically, the purposes and intents of social holiness, social gospel, and social change movements were to create a plan of action that embodied the gospel message, and that would ultimately address those negative situations of society.

John Wesley many times engaged in deep theoretical discussions regarding the gospel message as a base for his understanding of the church's response to society. In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount of Olives, Wesley was able to formulate his ethical understanding, but also his biblical and theological understanding of the church's role in the happenings of people lives. Without question, John Wesley was able to use the biblical text as an introduction to creating a response to the needs of society. That's why he referenced in his sermon, "*A Plane Account of Christian Perfection,*" "In the year 1729, I began not only to read, but to study the Bible, as the one, the only standard of truth, and the only model of pure religion. Hence I saw, in a clearer and clearer light, the indispensable necessity of having "the mind which was in Christ," and of "walking as Christ also walked;" even of having, not some part only, but all the mind which was in him; and of walking as he walked, not only in many or in most respects, but in all things."[69] John Wesley in his preaching and teaching of the biblical text pointed out that we [the church] are to emulate the works of Jesus Christ. Throughout the ministry of

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[68] Irv A. Brendlinger, *Social Justice Through the Eyes of Wesley: John Wesley's Theological Challenge to Slavery*, 129.

[69] "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," Wesley Center Online, accessed October 31, 2013, http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/a-plain-account-of-christian-perfection/.

Jesus, he went to meeting the needs of the people. In the healing of the man who was possessed by a demon in Mark's account, Jesus saw not only his spiritual need, but his physical need as well. In the healing of the ten lepers, the one that came back received not only physical healing, but a spiritual one as well. Here's Wesley's take on the subject matter, "Give way to our neighbor's conveniences, then our conveniences to our neighbor's necessities; our necessities to his extremities."[70] Wesley taught a radical social application of religious truth, not a spirituality that focused primarily on one's self. Even Jesus said, "Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life." For John Wesley that included social action.[71]

The historical significance of and the prevailing need for social change are found in the church's ability to apply these teachings and understandings and then promote the awareness of a greater need to make the church of Christ relatively relevant to the conditions of the people we serve. Historically, the church has always been the one place where people can find themselves in light of what God says they can be.

The church since its conception in Matthew 16:18 "…upon this rock I will build my church…" has held to a social aspect of the gospel message. Not only did the message of Jesus Christ speak of repentance and baptism, but it also spoke of teaching and setting free those that were held captive. As the church continues to grow and expand, so do those broad parameters of gospel instructions. People are not just held captive due to prison incarceration, or solitary confinement people are also being held captive to their ways of social and philosophical understanding.

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[70] Irv A. Brendlinger, *Social Justice Through the Eyes of Wesley: John Wesley's Theological Challenge to Slavery*, 131.

[71] Ibid.

The people we serve are suffering from a lack of real understanding of who Jesus Christ is and what he means to the church universal. People are looking for a real encounter with God, and that becomes interrupted when people experience everything but God. John Wesley and his theology spanned the Eighteenth Century and found a rebirth within the black Methodist church in persons like Bishops Reverdy C. Ransom and Joseph Gomez. They left their mark and legacy on the church that has in many ways been covered up by our lack of response to the church at large, namely the community.

This project aims to merely clarify the beginnings of this social concept and to identify its significance, and assert that it is still needed today in the Twenty First Century church. The foundational understanding of Methodism as set by John Wesley through the use of social holiness, and the usage of social change as a means to engage the church in community are blended to accomplish the ministry of the AME Church, through its mission statement. What remains to be seen is how these two terms can be further blended to accomplish the goal of taking the ministries the AME Church offers, and expanding them to reach an even larger community of believers, by being social conscious and relevant in the manner in which the AME Church does ministry.

Theological Foundations

Social change within the African Methodist Episcopal Church has many roots. On one side, it is a platform of ministry that this denomination has stood upon since its inception in 1787, in opposition to the racism and classism manifest at Philadelphia's St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church. On the other side, it is the conduit by which the church addresses the issues felt in everyday life. The writer argues that Social Change, as

outlined in the social creeds of the church, is spelled out clearly in the beliefs of the AME Church.[72] What is theological about social change is that it stems from the theological work of the Methodist Church's Founder, John Wesley, and how he understood God at work within the Methodist movement and community. Though he never became a Methodist, but rather maintained his membership with the Anglican Church in England he continued his work as founder. Within the Methodist movement, there were two movements at work. One was the Wesleyan movement, which were John Wesley's personal thoughts being brought to light through the Methodist movement. The other was the Methodist movement itself, which sought to spread throughout the land scriptural holiness, entailing the complete transformation of society and the establishment of a new creation or social order.

The Wesleyan movement, although grounded in the Methodist movement, was a commitment to the holiness project "It was the aim of Wesley's life, the centre of his thought and the force behind all of his actions."[73] John Wesley felt that the church was to respond to every evil that was present within society, to combat it with the teaching of the word of God, "…And to confront those who aided in spreading villainies such as slavery, addictions, and poverty."[74] It was for those reasons and more that Wesley coined the phrase *"social holiness"* as a means to link faith and social responsibility in an effort to bring about action.[75] Dag Hammarskjold, the late Secretary General of the United

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[72] Annetta L. Gomez-Jefferson, *The Sage of Tawawa: Reverdy Cassius Ransom, 1861-1959*, 263.

[73] Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 140.

[74] Lovett H. Weems Jr., *Pocket Guide: John Wesley's Message Today*, 62.

[75] Ibid.

Nations said, "The road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action."[76] Even in the biblical sense, holiness is not a denomination. It is not a character one pretends to have; neither is it a social attainment one asserts over another individual.

It is, however, a lifestyle with a response to the call of God. The call of God is, in fact, a call to action first to do good unto all men, especially those who are of the household of God, and second to seek the truly poor, the infirm, the mentally ill, and to meet their needs, such as they are. However, not even in that particular passage of scripture that says, "Do good unto all men, especially them that are of the household of faith" can one ascertain who the privileged ones are and who are to be neglected, (Galatians 6:10). Social Change is not reserved for any particular people. If you consider yourself a Christian, then you embrace the philosophy of Wesley that says, "I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation. This is the work that I know God has called me to; and sure I am that His blessing attends it."[77] It was clear to Wesley that Christianity is essentially a social religion, and to turn it into a solitary religion is indeed to destroy it.[78] He goes on further to say, "The gospel of Christ knows no religion but social: no holiness but social holiness."[79] Wesley made this statement in relation to the necessity for Christian fellowship. He was countering a privatized notion of Christian faith. Wesley believed one

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[76] Lovett H. Weems Jr., *Pocket Guide: John Wesley's Message Today*, 62.

[77] John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley 1703-1791* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classic Ethereal Library, 2000), 47.

[78] Lovett H. Weems Jr., *Pocket Guide: John Wesley's Message Today*, 62.

[79] Ibid.

cannot go to heaven alone, but one needs friends. It is within the Christian community that holiness of life is to be realized. Social holiness must extend beyond ecclesial *koinonia*.[80]

The African Methodist Episcopal Church, through its mission to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people, affirms Wesley's teaching, and therefore has the responsibility to ensure that the ministries offered through our churches are in fact social and are relevant to current social need.[81] Too many people are suffering from various social problems, and they are seeking help and assistance from the church. They are let down, however, because the church has failed to maintain a current understanding of where the people are within society.

If we are to be a Christian body following after the commandments of Jesus Christ, then the gospel we preach must be social, and it must be current and relevant. What good is the church if it fails in its aim of being a church of action and being sensitive to the times in which we live? This is what Wesley meant by social holiness. For Wesley, there is no religion but social, no holiness but social holiness. The communal forms of faith in the Wesleyan tradition not only promote personal growth, they also equip and mobilize us for mission and service to the world.[82]

In the late Nineteenth Century R. W. Dale, a Congregationalist preacher and theologian, stated, "the Methodist Church left out the doctrine of holiness which would serve as their potential in offering a great social ethic." This commentary on the

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[80] Johnston McMaster, "John Wesley on Social Holiness," Scribd, accessed Aril 3, 2014, http://www.scribd.com/doc/138308983/John-Wesley-on-Social-Holiness.

[81] Johnny L. Barbour, *The Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church,* 17.

[82] Ibid., 47-48.

Methodist Church calls for us to establish our efforts in offering social holiness to the world, by spreading scriptural holiness throughout the land. As we offer Christ as the solution to the problem, we have a social responsibility to care for the people we serve, not just to turn them aside. It is these kinds of practices that have caused a major decline in church attendance and participation. People feel as though they are only important to the church and the work of the church when the church wants to pontificate on church polity and doctrine while ignoring the social call to service.

Nevertheless, the importance of church can be reestablished by acknowledging its true purpose and mission. The words of Charles Wesley are very important as the church strives to be socially relevant and concerned. In one of his famous hymns he wrote, "A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify, a never-dying soul to save, and fit it for the sky. To serve the present age, my calling to fulfill, O may it all my powers engage to do my master's will."[83]

This ideal serves as the nucleus of what the church's role within society must be, and in most cases what the church should become, an agent of change. The importance of social change in regards to the ministries of the African Methodist Episcopal Church becomes diminished unless the church begins to involve itself in the lives of the people it serves. If not, there will be no need for the church. Johnston McMaster, the author of *John Wesley on Social Holiness,* notes that the modern tendency towards individualism has resulted in the Methodists coming to understand John Wesley's emphasis on social

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[83] "Charge to Keep I Have" (No. 242) *The African Methodist Episcopal Church Hymnal, 5th Ed.* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2002).

holiness as an individual experience.[84] John Wesley made it clear that the role of the Methodist Church was to reform. At every level of the church, those who called themselves Methodists were to address the social ills that were present in the world. If the ministries of the church are not addressing the real everyday issues of its people, then what purpose does the church serve? There is a plethora of issues and concerns before us today, and it is impossible to address them all.

However, we can do something about some of the issues that seem to be in within our communities such as: poverty, unjust imprisonment, unemployment, alcohol and drug addictions, institutional slavery, human trafficking, the church's role in politics, and the low education rate. This is a point of theological departure as it relates to the AME church. What does the church have to say about the issues that plague our people on an everyday basis? Wesley says reform.

We reform our societies into the societies they are designed to be by spreading scriptural holiness over the land, transforming the way we read scripture and understand theology to form a new socio-theological perspective with emphasis on social change. That's one solution. The other solution is action. Since the focus here is the African Methodist Episcopal Church, it can no longer stand still and watch people die a socially uninvolved death because of the lack of social reform.

The mission statement of the AME Church speaks volumes about what the church is supposed to do. Are we just talking, or are we practicing what we preach? If the church is serious about social change, then we must begin by giving life to the mission statement we've held to since the inception of African Methodism.

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[84] Johnston McMaster, "John Wesley on Social Holiness," Scribd, accessed Aril 3, 2014, http://www.scribd.com/doc/138308983/John-Wesley-on-Social-Holiness.

Bishop Joseph Gomez understood from a social change perspective this theological premise, "You cannot preach God to an empty stomach or to a person who feels he has no pride in or power over his own destiny."[85] He further argued "Each race should be given fullest opportunity to develop its particular genius, and make its distinct contribution…the real history of any race is the record of its distinctive contributions."[86]

Bishop Reverdy Cassius Ransom is quoted on the future of African Methodism in *The Social Teaching of the Black Church by Peter Paris,*

> While heaven is our final goal, our chief present concern is with life on this planet and human relations in our present society, to the end that the kingdom of God may be established among men. I see little hope for the survival of the A. M. E. Church, or any other distinctly religious Negro denomination, if we do not so apply the Gospel of Christ as to make it a vital force in the life of society. While the National Association for the Advancement of Colored people and the Urban League may argue, petition, protest, *and appeal, we are clothed with authority to declare, "Thus saith the Lord."*[87]

Both of these voices speak in unison of what it means to be AME, but even more, a Methodist. However, John Wesley stands out as a loud prominent presence in this area, because it was his fundamental understanding that Methodism as a movement was to be a Christian movement, and Christianity is essentially a social religion. The Gospel we preach is not our own, but that of a social thinker whose name is Jesus Christ, and who gave himself first to the people.

The masses that Christ ministered to had nothing to do with the church. Perhaps they were already injured in the non-applications of the church's mission, or perhaps they lived outside the confines of the church. Nevertheless, they were not too far from Jesus'

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[85] Vivian L. Holiday, *Classical and Modern Narratives of Leadership*, 143.

[86] Ibid., 144.

[87] Peter J. Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press 1985), 96.

reach. It follows then that it is not enough to be theologically correct and to hold to an impressive history. The African Methodist Episcopal Church must become an entity in the body of social believers who aim for social change.

"The gospel of Christ knows no religion but social religion. No holiness but social holiness" says Wesley.[88] As Methodists, we are held to an even deeper tie to be "martyrs and servants." Thus, it is true that "the world hears the gospel when it sees it—when its witnesses are clearly concerned with human existence and clearly committed to a more fully human future…"[89]

The church's mission statement provides the theological foundation for this discussion of social change. I have raised this question before: if the church is not current, nor relevant to the people we serve, then what purpose does the church serve? If we are to be the church Richard Allen founded and the church of John Wesley, then our mandate is to address the ills of society by combating them with social holiness, which in turn is to spread scriptural holiness across the land and mimic the work of Christ, creating social change from a Christian perspective.

A wonderful understanding of John Wesley's original plan for the Methodist movement is that he has described social holiness as a renewal of the whole image of God, not from an individualistic point of view, but from a creation point of view. All those who are called of God to Christian service should often renew themselves in the image of God by reflecting the work within the community of believers.

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[88] Lovett H. Weems, Jr. *Pocket Guide: John Wesley's Message Today*, 72.

[89] Ibid.

The horizon of social holiness would then be set over the whole world both created and recreated. If social holiness was described in terms of perfect love, then it involved social relations, which simply means to meet the needs of the people we serve, whatever the need may be.[90] The goal here is to erect a constantly expanding structure of social change and social activism. Let us look to D. Elton Trueblood, a Quaker and Twentieth Century theologian, who offer this critique "You cannot reasonably expect to erect a constantly expanding structure of social activism upon a diminishing foundation of faith."

In order to erect a constantly expanding structure of social activism, let us look at various theological perspectives. Systematic theology is the systematic [methodical] organization of theology; its prime concern is to present a clear and ordered overview of the main themes of the Christian faith.[91] What are the main themes of the Christian faith? Jesus said in Mark 12:30-31 "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these."

As the African Methodist Episcopal Church lives out the words of Christ, the ministries the church offers various social organizations such as: Women's Missionary Society, Lay Organization, Young People's Division, Richard Allen Young Adult Youth Council, Sons of Allen, Debutants and Masters, and Young Women's Initiative. These organizations are available through the church because it should be socially engaging,

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[90] Johnston McMaster, "John Wesley on Social Holiness," Scribd, accessed Aril 3, 2014, http://www.scribd.com/doc/138308983/John-Wesley-on-Social-Holiness.

[91] Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology an Introduction* (Malden, IL: Blackwell Publishers, 2011).

relevant and current meeting the needs of people, whatever they may be. Therefore it is clear from a theological perspective that the main objective or concern would be to present a more ordered view of the main themes of the Christian faith, which Wesley believed was a fundamental part of the Christian life. It was not just an option for an elite few, but a necessity nurtured through a supportive and disciplined community.[92]

These ministries and organizations should not be alleviated, but the mission and purpose of these ministries and organizations are not social in nature. They are not current, and as for meeting the needs of the people the church serves, they are not relevant in their application of the mission of the AME Church. The church cannot remain socially uninvolved if the church is to exist at all.

[92] Kevin M. Watson, *Pursuing Social Holiness* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 39.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Social change refers to an alteration of a society, to include changes in social institutions, behaviors, and human relations. Within the African Methodist Episcopal Church, social change is one of the many reasons that lead to the formation of the first black denomination within the United States. Within the mission of the AME Church, there are clear and specific roles in which the church envisioned playing with the lives of its members.

The ministries of the AME Church was therefore tailored to reflect the word of God and to address social issues that were relevant during the time of its inception. The hypothesis of this project was made in the form of a question, "are the ministries of the AME church relevant to the people we serve today?" In order to fully answer that question, one has to look at the ministries offered by the AME Church on a connectional level and the ministries that are offered on a local level.

The purpose of the question is not to offend the church or its ministries, but rather to cause the leaders of the denomination to take a deep and serious look into the spiritual, and social relevancy of these ministries offered. Through a five-part sermon series from the Old Testament Eighth Century Prophets which reflected some the greatest thinking and wisdom at that time, the writer was able to address social issues that were germane to the nature and ministry of the local congregation in which he served as senior pastor.

The sermons dealt with issues of communication, righteousness, and justice. Through these illustrative sermons the writer was able to present the sociological understanding of social change, and how social change has spiritual and theological connotations that are germane to the work of total and restorative transformation within the church and the community. The spiritual aspect of the sermons was aim at the will and intent of the members of Wayman AME Church, and to appeal to their level of social holiness, with a desired intent to commit them to the work of social regeneration with the city of Wheeling West Virginia.

To further explain the message of social change from a biblical perspective a specialize Bible study was created that took various components of the previous Sunday message and the different aspects of the text that were from the writers interpretation directed to the members of Wayman AME Church. As means to correlate the renderings of social change from the academic and sociological perspective, the pastor as well as a member of the context took the "What kind of social change agent are you?" quiz that was produced by Walden University.

Both the pastor and member were identified to be faith-inspired givers based upon the fact that they can cite faith and not their schooling or work ethics to be the major influence on their commitment to social change. With these three segments of the researchers project it is the hopeful and wishful intent that the members of Wayman AME Church along with the African Methodist Episcopal Church can begin to develop acts of ministry that will function as social service agency's within the local church, and will address the needs of the people, whatever the needs may be.

Intervention

The project officially began with a presentation made to the Third Episcopal District AME Church Mid-Year Conference held in Columbus, OH March 2014. A power point presentation was made to the members of the conference, which represented three states Ohio, Western Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. The audience was made up of both clergy and laypersons representing their perspective churches and conferences. At the end of the presentation, the writer set up a table and passed out a surveys and questionnaires that asked questions that were germane to the writer's project.

In September 2014, the writer launched a five-part sermon series as well as a specialized Bible study that reflected each sermon. During the Bible study period, a discussion was held regarding each sermon and scripture text and what they meant to the context of Wayman Church and their level of care and concern for the ministries they offered. Also,0. a group had a discussion regarding the 2013 social change impact report produced by Walden University.

The reports as well as a quiz that determined the several different types of social change agents were useful to the work of this project and what it was designed to do, which was to bring an awareness of the need for social change within the church. The ultimate goal was to remind the congregation of their Christian responsibility, which was in part social in nature, and to develop a real sense of social holiness that would lead the congregation in developing acts of ministry that would produce positive social change within Wayman AME Church and the Wheeling community.

Research Design and Instrumentation

The researcher used a mixed methodology, which is defined as using both qualitative and quantitative research methods to gauge a specific understanding of the researcher's context. The triangulation of the data was done in six easy parts, a pre-survey and questionnaire, a power point presentation, a five part sermon series, a specialized Bible study review of each sermon, a quiz produced by Walden University entitled "What type of social change agent are you?" and lastly an electronic interview with four members of the researchers context. The initial survey and questionnaire was fifteen questions long, the questions were both multiple choice and open-ended and they ranged from questions regarding the mission of the AME Church, the ministries of the AME Church, and their social relevance, there were also questions about social issues, and a question that asks the responders to determine for themselves what type of social change agent they were.

The power point presentation was used to explain the need for social change in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and to identify an existing model for developing a socially relevant ministry that existed in the AME Church through the ministry of Bishop Joseph Gomez, the key person that inspired the writer to conduct this project. Concerning to the sermon series, a Bible study review was conducted following each sermon that asked questions that were related to the sermon. There were also quotes from the sermon used to reinforce that specific sermon and scripture text's main point and objective. The last goal of the Bible study review was to spark conversations about creating a social response to the issues faced by the members of Wayman AME Church and the people living in the Wheeling area inspired by the word of God.

These conversations were also used to identify their individual level of care for sponsoring socially relevant ministries that will address the needs and problems of the church and community. The electronic interview which was five questions long and was completed by four members from within the context, identified their understanding of the project, their level of attention during the sermons series, lasting impressions, discussions had, and level of growth. The reason for choosing a mixed methodology was simple, in order to ascertain a churches level of understanding regarding the subject matter presented to them, you need to be able to identify what they know, how well do they know it and what they do not know. The second reason is to seek out what they feel about the subject matter, meaning can they relate to the subject and produce a working answer that clearly shows their level of competence. The last aspect of a mixed methodology allows the researcher to measure the effects of the project through of a questionnaire that gives room for an individual to tell what they knew prior the project beginning and what they learned as a result of having participated, and their growth from the knowledge gained.

Measurement

Out of 50 surveys and questionnaires that were disseminated to the Third District Mid-Year Conference the researcher only received a total of ten to fifteen from the conference attendees. The low return rate made it difficult to properly access the level of understanding from the members of the district who are of the ministries of the AME Church. In regards to the local context, Wayman AME Church, the membership of the church has been determined to be inconclusive. There were several years of no reports

turned in to the annual conference from previous administrations, which makes it difficult to determine the actual membership. Of the fifty members of Wayman Church with a regular attendance, twenty-four to thirty members was present every Sunday. Bible study attendance was approximately seven members every week. Given the history of this congregation, the level of care and concern for the mandatory work of the congregation, and their participation in it, it was deem difficult to establish the true level of growth and development based on the researchers project.

Out of the seven attendees from the Bible study, only four members from the context consented to participate in the electronic interview. The reason for the electronic interview was due to the fact that the researcher was transferred from the West Virginia Annual Conference to the North Ohio Annual Conference, and stationed at the charge of St. Andrewes African Methodist Episcopal Church in Youngstown, OH. Because the researcher was given only thirty days to move out of the manse, and to the relocate to his new work of ministry, he had to communicate with the members of his former context via telephone calls and electronic mail. The four respondents were all women ranging in age from thirty-one to fifty-eight years old; their races were three blacks and one white.

Their responses to the sermon series, and Bible study were at best vague for three of the respondents; only one gave an in-depth analysis of all the sermons preached as well as a complete response to the purpose and intent of the Bible study review. When asked about their personal growth and development having witnessed the sermon series, and participated in the Bible study review, again only one provided a complete answer that reflected the goal of the project, which was to influence one's Christian responsibility by bringing awareness of the need for social change within the AME

Church, and he community. To address the lack of social response to the problems faced by members of the church and everyday people, and to combat those problems through the creation of socially relevant ministries or act of ministry that will bring about social holiness and social change.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

The name of this project is Social Change within the African Methodist Episcopal Church, through the ministry of Bishop Joseph Gomez. The AME Church is the oldest black historical Church founded by descendent of African ancestry whose sole desire was to create a church that was to be uniquely Methodist. Founder Bishop Richard Allen and others began attending worship at St. Georges Methodist Episcopal Church, South in Philadelphia, PA until they were forced from their position of prayer and remanded to the balcony.

This act of both racial and religious segregation caused by the white trustees of St. Georges Church led to the great walk out and the creation of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. Richard Allen did not want to create a separate denomination for black people; he desired to create a church that would minister to the needs of the total person. Therefore, the African Methodist Episcopal Church was not founded on philosophical or theological differences, but rather racial, ethical, and social differences.

The AME Church founded Mother Bethel AME Church and adopted as its mission statement, "To minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people." This mission statement combined with the church's vision and purpose, which

is to 1. Make available God's biblical principles 2. Spread Christ's liberating gospel 3. Provide continuing programs, which will enhance the entire social development of all people. This would allow the leaders of the church to create a ministry of serving the people of God, and ministering to their needs whatever the need may be.

During the researchers matriculation at Allen University, the Dean of Students, Reverend Willie Antoni Sinkfield gave the freshman student a book, *The Sage of Tawawa: Reverdy Cassius Ransom 1861-1959* written by Annetta Louise Gomez-Jefferson in that book the researcher discovered that Bishop Reverdy Ransom desired to create a ministry of service that would be catered to the needs of the people whatever the needs were. That book, as well as other books written by Gomez-Jefferson, is what led the writer on a socio-theological journey to uncover his passion for ministry within the AME Church. The writer learned by reading the book above that throughout the ministry of Bishop Ransom he championed issues such as race, segregation, social change and social inequality.

Bishop Ransom understood with clarity that his role as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ was not just to preach the word of God to the parishioners that attended his church, but also to educate them on the systemic evils of racism that was affecting their culture and society. During his tenure as bishop, he met a young man named Joseph Gomez who became the sixty-seventh elected and consecrated bishop of the AME Church. Their relationship became that of mentor and mentee and later a surrogate son. Bishop Ransom deposited in Bishop Joseph Gomez the theological teachings of John Wesley regarding social holiness as a response to the issues that faced not only the people in their communities, but also the very people who attended their churches.

The ideals of social holiness, which was to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land, a figurative response with deep spiritual meaning in regards to areas of social need such as poverty, race inequality, and education. John Wesley understood the gospel message as "the gospel of Christ knows no religion, but social: no holiness but social holiness."[1] This was the essential theme of John Wesley's ministry, and it became the foundation for the ministry Bishop Ransom that would come to fruition through the ministry of Bishop Joseph Gomez.

With this understanding the researcher set out to conduct a ministry project following the teachings and ministry of Bishop Joseph Gomez, and John Wesley by doing so he aimed at creating an act of ministry) that would provide a more spiritual understanding of the role of the church in community through social awareness ministries that address social issues.

On November 12, 2011, the Reverend Brandon A. A. J. Davis was appointed senior pastor of Wayman AME Church located at 1136 Eoff Street Wheeling West, VA. Not fully understanding his purpose and role as pastor, he nevertheless sought out to be the best pastor and preacher he could be. The writer quickly gained interest in the community at-large and was soon sought out as a guest columnist for the *Wheeling-Intelligencer Newspaper*, and board member of several organizations to include Wheeling Branch NAACP, Executive Board Member and Vice President, State Parliamentarian for the West Virginia State Convention of the NAACP, keynote speaker for the 2014 Annual Spring Luncheon West Virginia NAACP, Laughlin Memorial Chapel Board of Directors Board Secretary, Ohio County Substance Abuse Coalition Clergy Representative, and the Upper Ohio Valley Ministerial Alliance Secretary and

[1] Lovett H. Weems, Jr., *Pocket Guide to John Wesley's Message Today*, 72.

Vice President. These organizations as well as writing opportunities provided the researcher with a chance of a lifetime to shape his ministry after the ministry of one of the most respected and beloved historical figures of the AME Church. Having read about the work and ministry of Joseph Gomez, the writer knew that it was the divine will of God to conduct a ministry project regarding social change within the African Methodist Episcopal Church through the ministry of Bishop Joseph Gomez.

Context Associates

There were four context associates chose to assist with this ministry project Mrs. Terrie Lee Stradwick, Diane Elizabeth Jackson, Darlean "Sissy" Stradwick, and Jacqueline Marie Crider Harris. These four ladies were chosen because of their faithfulness to their church and their commitment to their pastor in doing this project and completing his work for the doctoral degree program. Their primary contributions were divided into several areas one in particular was their knowledge about Wayman AME Church, Terrie Stradwick along with Diane Jackson grew up in Wayman Church, therefore, they were useful in gaining knowledge and history of the local congregation as well as having a resource to pull from concerning the church and the community. Darlean and Jackie joined Wayman Church during Pastor Davis' administration and became useful in helping wherever they could and providing support to the pastor, his ministry, vision, and goals and in completing his doctoral degree work.

The context associates and the researcher met almost weekly during Sunday morning services, and mid-week Bible study as well as at their place of employment. All four context associates were employed at Jesuit University working in food services; they

not only aided the pastor in his ministry but provided meals for him as well. They truly cared for their pastor. In regards to the project Terrie and Jackie were the principal persons who helped with the reproduction of materials such as the pre-survey and questionnaire, the power point handout, and all the copies needed to compile the researchers candidacy review packet, they also helped to band, staple and box materials for the researchers presentation at the Third Episcopal District Mid-Year Celebration.

Finally their participation is noted for their presence at church during the sermon series presented, and the Bible study that followed each week. Their last act of participation prior to the writer's appointment to St. Andrewes AME Church in Youngstown, OH was the completion of the post electronic interview, which gauged their response, understanding and growth as a result of having participated in this project.

Professional Associates

There were three professional associates who assisted with this project they were the Christie Fontaine Covington, Rev. Dennis Clark Dickerson, and Rev. Melvin Gérard Rippy. These persons provided the researcher with a wide range of assistance and a wealth of information surrounding the subject matter. Their greatest contribution was their availability to talk to the researcher and to provide him with encouragement as well as serve as an accountability partner that aided him in the final completion of his project.

Dr. Christie Covington served as a member under watch care at Wayman AME Church, although she was a member in good and regular standing with the United Methodist Church. Her assistance with the project was crucial and vital given her many years of study and education in law and research. She was also a noted local historian and

was capable of assisting the writer with information on statistical information. Her degree contributions are a Bachelor of Science degree in Management from the University of Maryland at College Park, a Masters of Arts degree in Legal Studies from Antioch University School of Law, a Juris Doctorate from David A. Clarke School of Law, University of the District of Columbia, and finally a Masters of Business Administration from Wheeling Jesuit University.

Reverend Dennis Clark Dickerson is a retired General Officer for the Department of Research and Scholarship of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He served for twenty-five years as it chief historian. Dr. Dickerson served as a huge proponent of this project in that he provided historical material, books, facts, and advice on writing the document as well as for the implementation of the project. Dr. Dickerson and Pastors Davis met several years ago during one of his visits to the North Carolina Annual Conference. They remained in contact during his matriculation at Allen University, and when he arrived as a student at Payne Theological Seminary they expanded their acquaintance into a mutual friendship.

The writer was not, however, fortunate to be a student of Dr. Dickerson's AME History class at Payne Seminary. However, the writer was permitted to sit in and join the discussion. Pastor Davis and Dr. Dickerson both were recipients of facts, books, and original pictures that were the personal property of Mrs. Louise Gomez-Jefferson, the daughter of Bishop Joseph Gomez. This connection plus his vast knowledge of all things African Methodist is what has made this project a success. Dr. Dickerson brings to the table a chaired position at Vanderbilt University in their history department, as well as several adjunct faculty positions at several schools, seminaries and universities

throughout the United States. His education obtainment includes a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Lincoln University, a Master of Art degree in History from Washington University, a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in History and Masters of Divinity from Vanderbilt University.

The last professional associate is Rev. Melvin G. Rippy, who is the pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church in Wheeling West, VA. Dr. Rippy and Pastor Davis pastored in the same community on the same city block. The two met each other while attending the Upper Ohio Valley Ministerial Alliance. Dr. Rippy was able to assist the writer with advice and collegial encouragement having gone through the rigor of a Doctor of Ministry program at Howard Divinity School in Washington D.C.

Dr. Rippy brings sociological background to the project having been employed by a state agency in Pittsburgh, PA helping people with recovery from drug abuse and addiction. Dr. Rippy was one of the few pastors in the area who had advanced ministerial training and was willing to assist the researcher with his work and project implementation. His educational background included a Bachelor of Science degree in Community Ministry from Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, a Masters of Divinity degree from Virginia Union Theological Seminary, and the Doctor a Ministry degree from Howard University School of Divinity.

All three of these professional associates were in place when needed and provided not only their expertise from their perspective fields and backgrounds, but they were also firm accountability partners giving encouragement in moments of distress when the project was appearing to struggle, and as well as in moments of celebration. Their assistance was not only wanted but also greatly appreciated.

Project Launch

The project was prefaced by a presentation to the Third Episcopal District Mid-Year Session held March 2014 in Columbus, OH. The writer was given special permission by the Presiding Bishop of the Third Episcopal District, Bishop McKinley Young to pass out a surveys and questionnaires to gage the thinking and understanding of both clergy and lay members regarding the mission of the AME Church, certain key historical information. The purpose was to learn what they felt the AME Church could do in response to other social issues and crisis, and lastly if they were familiar with or at least heard of Bishop Joseph Gomez. During one of the mid-day session the writer presented a power point presentation entitled *"Social Change within the African Methodist Episcopal Church, through the Ministry of Bishop Joseph Gomez."* This presentation covered information about the bishop, his ministry focus, and the response of the AME Church today. The project took place at Wayman AME Church on September 14, 2014 and ended on October 19, 2014. The project consisted of a five part sermon series that was subdivided into two parts: communication and prophetic witness.

The reason for this separation was so that the pastor could effectively teach and educate the people on how to properly communicate not only the word of God, but also the message of social holiness and social change. This key factor was significant to the process because John Wesley hinged a major portion of his work in this field of study based upon how one communicated the tenants of scripture as well as the gospel message. One would not fully know and understand Christ being a social change agent unless that part of his character was demonstrated in scripture and communicated as a part of the gospel message.

The second reason for this separation was to demonstrate that the Bible is a prophetic witness to God's will for human creation and human creations response to the will of God in the world today. The Old Testament has much influence on the world today as it did during the time of the prophets, therefore, the goal was to relay that message to the people in hopes that they would become inspired to do the work of social change within the AME Church.

Along with the five part sermon series there was an evening Bible study series that was conducted following each sermon that went into deeper conversation regarding the message that was preached, with specific intent to communicate that message in light of the work and ministry of Wayman AME Church. Also during one the Bible studies, a quiz was administered by the pastor, which was produced by Walden University as a part of their *2013 Social Change Impact Report*, the title of the quiz was *"what kind of social change agent are you?"* the 2013 Social Change Impact Report identifies distinctive profiles of social change agents around the world and includes many of their key motivations, interests, and levels of involvement, ultimately putting a face on social change agents.[2]

The sermons preached in the series came from various scripture texts and outlined issues relating to the role of the leader and the role of people within the church and the community. The sermons were also tailored specifically to the context, which the writer served as senior pastor. The writer aimed to display how social holiness was portrayed through the tenant of scripture, and how Holy Scripture encourages a response to the ills

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[2] Walden University, "*2013 Social Change Impact Report*," accessed on February 22, 2015, http://www.waldenu.edu/about/social-change/impact-report-2013.

of society. Lastly to inform the people of the prophetic witness of the text that calls for a righteousness of justice through the actions of called Christian people to be more than just Sunday Christians, but also to be the catalyst through which social change is possible. Listed below are the sermons preached within the project.

1. A Calling to do what is Right, Proverbs 21:2-3:13,15
2. The Righteousness of Justice, Deuteronomy 16:18-20
3. A Midnight Cry for Justice, Isaiah 1:17, 27
4. When Justice Comes, Isaiah 5:15-23
5. What Does the Lord Require, Micah 6:8

The Bible studies covered each sermon after it was preached and the lessons taught were related directly to the writer's context. Some the frustrations experienced within the project itself was the lack of support from the lay and clergy persons that were present at the Mid-Year meeting in Columbus of 2014. It was the writer's hope that everyone would have participated in the survey and questionnaire in hopes to gain a better understanding of what the researcher was writing regarding the ministry of the AME Church.

Out of fifty surveys and questionnaires given out, there were only ten to fifteen returned to the writer, and out of those numbers, six were laypersons and the balance where clergy. Other frustrations came from the writer's context was that only four persons from Wayman Church who actively participated from the beginning of the researcher's project until the end of the project. Because there were only two persons within the congregation who had advanced academic training, i.e., masters and doctorate degrees, and also because a significant number of the members that did attend services at the church were senior citizens, gaining their attention proved to be a difficult thing.

Their response toward the project was that they simply were not interested. Nevertheless, Pastor Davis continued with tenacity to influence the entire membership of Wayman with his doctoral document as well as his project. In the end, he was grateful for the members that did show an active interest and provided assistance when needed.

Collection Data

In order to fully grasp if the message of the five part sermon series was reaching the people and if it there was an affect on the congregation's understanding of the project, which was to become agents of social change, by embracing a personal ethos concerning social holiness. The writer conducted a specialized Bible study that reflected heavily on the previous Sunday morning sermon. Each Wednesday the pastor called the members of the church to attend what was their regularly scheduled mid-week refresher (Bible study) and during that hour session the pastor presented an outlined that reflected the sermon previously preached.

The specialized Bible study was presented with statements that were tailored to the congregation. Some of them had multiple answers directed to the participants to prompt their response to the sermon. There were also quotes from the sermon that were used to jolt the memory of the participants to specific key points made in the sermon itself. Lastly, there were questions and statements made by the participants that were specific for the church. The goal was to inspire actions within the church that would trickle into the community. Some of the questions asked are listed below.

1. What is righteousness?
    a. The perfect will of God in Creation
    b. Right Practice
    c. The acts of God

d. The character of God
e. The state of moral perfection as required of God

2. What is justice?
    a. The right behavior and treatment of people
    b. A concern for order within culture and society
    c. In referencing the Bible, it is the will of God to reestablish order within creation
    d. The restoration of people in the community
    e. The strengthening of people to be effective members of society

3. What is social holiness, social change?
    a. The necessity of Christian fellowship, the empowerment of the Christian community through the renewal image of God in creation. To see ourselves through the eyes of God.
    b. To alter the social order of society, to include norms, behaviors, and cultural practices.

Again the purpose and intent was to remind the people of the message of social holiness and social change as found in scripture, to engage their personal sociological, philosophical, and theological understandings, while shaping their understanding according to the word of God. With each proceeding Bible study there was special attention given to the message as well as the message for the local congregation. The ultimate success of the sermon series and Bible study will be measured through the creation of act of ministry that will address the needs of the people whatever the need may be both in the church and the community.

Analyzing the Data and the Outcome

The final part of the project concluded with an electronic interview from four of the members within the local context that gauged their understanding of the sermon series, Bible study series, the quiz from Walden University, and the project itself. All four

members gave their full attention to detail and answered the questions with clarity and understanding, as they understood the project. They provided information about their understanding of the project, their understanding of social change and the role of the church in the community. They identified their personal growth and development.

All three aspects of the project was directed at helping the congregation to better understand the importance of social holiness, and social change as it relates to the ministries of the African Methodists Episcopal Church, the local congregation and the community where its ministry exist. It was clear by the level of participation that the people of Wayman Church were simply interested in being a church that met on Sunday morning, worshiped and went home.

Because this was already, a small congregation growth was minimal, but not impossible. There was no present need to reinvent the wheel, the ministries of the AME church were more than enough to sustain the work and outreach of Wayman Church. The ministries needed to be tailored to the local community with a specific interest in meeting the needs of the people through the various branches of the churches ministerial capability. Therefore, had there have been more of a concerted interest perhaps the project would have been more successful.

Nevertheless, the ultimate success of the sermon series and Bible study was measured through the creation of an act of ministry that addressed the needs of the people whatever the need may be both in the church and the community. It is then that the work of this project will gain some sort of fruition in the reshaping of Wayman AME Church's understanding when it comes to ministry, and ministry to the people, and in the shaping of its act of ministry to the people of the city of Wheeling.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, REFLECTIONS, AND CONCLUSION

While a student at Historic Allen University located in Columbia, SC the writer served as an assistant to the dean of student services, Rev. Willie Antoni Sinkfield. Reverend Sinkfield also was the pastor of Bishops' Memorial AME Church, a historic congregation named aptly for the many pastors' that served there who were later elected and consecrated bishops in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. It was also the University Church were the writer was privileged to serve on staff.

Many days they would discuss those things that were of great concern to them regarding the ministry of the church, its direction, and its survival. Because the writer came to Allen as an ordained minister, and having been influenced by several pastors, a general officer named Dr. Ricky Spain who was like a father to him, as well as several Bishops, one in particular Bishop Vinton R. Anderson who was his Episcopal father, mentor, and friend. Because of these relationships the writer possessed a sense of understanding of the church, but never fully investigated what it meant to be a minister in the world's first and oldest black denomination founded upon sociological principals heavily influenced by Wesleyan theology. Rev. Sinkfield challenged Brandon to think outside the box, to look at the church from a critical perspective as it relates to his ministry and the ministry he was called to do. During one of their intense discussions Rev. Sinkfield talked about the context of African Methodism, it was then that the writer

began to look at the church not as the total of all things, but the context in which he was called to a specific work. During that conversation, he was given a book, *The Sage of Tawawa, Reverdy Cassius Ransom 1861-1959."* While reading the book the writer began to develop a sociological understanding of the ministry of the AME Church, at the end of that book was an advertisement for the author's second book, which was about Bishop Joseph Gomez. It was after reading Bishop Gomez's biography that the writer began to develop the hypothesis that would serve as the framework for this project.

Social change in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, through the ministry of Bishop Joseph Gomez, has been a work in progress. During the writers symposium for his Bachelor of Arts degree in social science, he produced a presentation that was centered on the question: "Are the ministries of the AME Church relevant to the people we serve today?" During his matriculation at Payne Theological Seminary studying for his Master of Divinity degree his thesis was written on the same subject, and now he has expanded the work of this subject to a biblical, historical, theological, and theoretical perspective.

Brandon has been in ministry now for twenty-one years, a pastor for twelve years, and having served six congregations as supply pastor, youth pastor, and senior pastor. While serving at Wayman AME Church in Wheeling, WV, Brandon experienced a wilderness moment, the reasons that brought him to that church were not all positive reasons, nevertheless, he learned that God had a specific work for him to do while serving that congregation. It was there that he felt a calling to do doctoral work, and it was there that he was able to put a plan of action together to conduct this project. Wayman AME Church was a small family congregation that was not fully capable of

accepting a young single preacher who was seminary trained. Not many in the congregation had any advanced educational training and were very sensitive to the impression that they were dumb.

Though the writer worked hard to not convey that impression in his leadership and preaching, it took time for them to feel his love and respect for the church. The project that was conducted at Wayman was not in any way a monumental work, the participation was not great, and there was little support. However, there were four people in that church that saw something in Brandon, and, therefore, pledged their love, prayers, financial support, and encouragement to him. Pastoring Wayman was truly an experience that taught him a very vital lesson in ministry, God does not call preachers to have an opinion; instead God calls them to love the people and to preach the word, and when you know your lane stay in it.

That lesson came during his first year at Wayman and was the inspiration needed to carry out the work for this project. Social change in the AME Church is a message of love that extends to the connectional church, but it begins at the local level. In order to fully engage the people about their response to the problems faced by the congregation and the community, one has to develop their own individual response to social holiness before they can spread it beyond the walls of the church.

Although Wayman did not fully take to the work that Brandon was trying to do in this doctoral dissertation, the success of it is found in those four members who gave their time and energy in trying to comprehend what it means to be agents of social change. The AME Church has an impressive history, but that history is not enough to attract people to our churches and to keep them there. People today are looking for a message of hope, a

message of concern, and a message that causes them to look at their role as Christian leaders and to provide not just a way of escape from the problems that they face, but a real answer to the happenings of life.

This project was aimed at not answering the question of: "are the ministries of the AME Church relevant to the people we serve today?" but rather to simply look at what we do as AME's, the ministries we offer, the people we serve and to judge for ourselves it's relevancy. Jesus Christ is more than a person who embodies the love of God for creation, he is an institution of social care and concern, and if we are to mimic him, then we must do so in word and deed.

People today are affected by a myriad of problems, burdens, cares, and concerns, and the church should be more than just a hospital for the spiritually sick and wounded, but the social agency for change that address the total person, not just a select few. This journey was a blessing and a privilege to experience, the writer learned just as much about himself, as he did about what John Wesley meant when he said "the world is my parish."

While the measurement of this work may have been proven to be inconclusive, those four members who attended church every Sunday along with the other congregants, attended the Bible study, and participated in the quiz and electronic interview represents just a fraction of the people who are AME throughout the world who to are asking the same questions, and have the same concerns. It is because of people like that, that Bishop Joseph Gomez continued his fight for social change in every arena he was in, and what ultimately lead him to change the way he saw ministry in this context. The writer will not stop just because the project was not as successful as he hoped it would be, or because it

has come to an end, but he will continue to spread the message of social hope in the AME Church to all who are willing to listen. Change is not easy, and from the experiences had on this doctoral journey, change does not take place overnight. Nevertheless, change is possible, and as long as there is someone who is willing to lift up their voices to speak out against the social evils that are affecting the church and the community, the message of social change will never die. Someone smarter, more brilliant, and more capable will pick the mantle and carry the message on… to you, from failing hands, we throw the torch: be yours to hold it high.[1]

[1] John McCrae, "Flanders Fields Poem," Flanders Fields Music, accessed on February 24, 2015, http://www.flandersfieldsmusic.com/thepoem.html.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY AND QUESTIONNAIRE

Social Change within the African Methodist Episcopal Church
Survey and Questionnaire

Rev. Brandon A. A. J. Davis, BA., M.Div
Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Ministry in Prophetic Preaching and Praxis
Walker/Cummings Group

Instructions: Please write your response in the space provided, if you need more space please use page (4), just indicated what question number you are responding to. At the bottom of page (4) there is space for your church, PE-District, and Annual Conference information, please fill in your information and remember NOT to sign your name.

1. Do you know the Mission of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, if yes, what part(s) speaks to you?

2. What are the ministry components of the AME Church?

3. How affective are these ministries in meeting the needs of the local congregation, and community?

4. What should the churches response be regarding social change *(Please circle your answer)*
   a. Church/Community Activism
   b. Passive Aggression (Acknowledge it but do nothing)
   c. I Don't Know

5. Should Clergy and Congregations preach more about Social Sins? *(Please circle your answer)*
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I don't know
   d. I don't care

6. As a Clergy or Lay person are you willing to accept being ostracized, being publically ridiculed or suffer financial repercussions for speaking about social problems *(Please circle your answer)*
   a. Yes

b. No
c. Maybe
d. Not Sure

7. From your perspective, how up to date are the AME Church and your local congregation about modern slavery and human trafficking in foreign AME Districts? *(Please circle your answer)*
   a. We are up to date
   b. We could do and say more about it
   c. It's not our problem
   d. We should keep quite

8. Should AME's be active against the violation of human rights? *(Please circle your answer)*
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Maybe
   d. Not Sure

9. Should AME's be active against economic hardships, crisis, or inequality *(Please circle your answer)*
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Maybe
   d. Not Sure

10. What is your level of responsibility in or to the community?

11. What does your faith say about the social problems?

12. What biblical passage(s) speaks powerfully to you about the church's or your role or response to social activism or action

13. What is the church's greatest challenge of outreach in today's society?

14. How much do you agree with the following? *(Please circle your answer)*
    a. I chose my issue or issues because of the importance of my local church and community
    b. I chose my issue or issues because of the effects on people around the world.
    c. I chose my issue or issues because of personal feelings and beliefs.
    d. I don't have an opinion

15. What type of Social Contributor are you? *(Please circle your answer)*
    a. Ultra committed Change-Maker *(Committed to positive social change through personal philosophy and action)*
    b. Faith-Inspired Giver *(Religion and Faith are your driving forces for social change)*
    c. Socially Conscious Consumer *(Supporting others who support social change. Faith isn't your motivation)*
    d. Purposeful Participant *(Your motives for participation are related to school, work, or for public record)*
    e. Casual Contributor *(Local community issues are the driving force for your involvement)*
    f. Social Change Spectator *(You may engage at some point but you're not an active participant)*

Church Name_____

Presiding Elder District_____

Annual Conference_____

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